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**FIVE YEARS IN THE SUDAN**





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THE AUTHOR WITH HIS RECORD TUSKS

Frontispiece

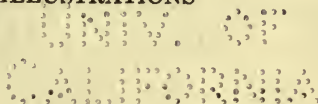


# FIVE YEARS IN THE SUDAN

BY  
EDWARD FOTHERGILL

“ When Allah made the Sudan he laughed ”  
Native saying

WITH 32 ILLUSTRATIONS



LONDON  
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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IN the year 1885 Gordon fell at Khartoum, and the Sudan passed into the hands of the Mahdi. In 1898, thirteen years later, the combined forces of England and Egypt met and defeated the hosts of the Khalifa at Omdurman. The regeneration of the Sudan may be dated from that year, though it was more than twelve months later that the Khalifa himself, making a desperate effort to regain his fallen power, died on the field of battle, and combined resistance on the part of the Sudanese ceased. Twelve years have therefore elapsed since the English entered the country : it is of the earlier part of this time that I have written.

As the title of the book suggests, it is filled for the most part with reminiscences of the time which I spent in the Sudan. I have not attempted to probe deeply into either the politics or the local administration of the country : any remarks which I have made on these subjects have arisen naturally out of their bearing upon the subject of which I was writing at the moment. And I wish to make it clear that in cases where it may seem that a direct attack has been made upon individuals, it was not

my intention to condemn any one man personally, but the Government which was responsible for and condoned his actions.

I have to thank Mr. G. B. Middleton for having placed his fine collection of photographs at my disposal: nearly all those published in this book are from his camera, and many of them were taken in the days when I had the great fortune to have Mr. Middleton as a companion in big-game shooting.

I am also indebted to Captain Channer, of the Egyptian Army, for some photographs, and for much entertaining and original information regarding the Sudan and its people.

To His Excellency the Sirdar and Governor-General of the Sudan, who is mainly responsible for its present-day prosperity, to Slatin Pasha, the Inspector-General, and to many other officers of the Sudan service, my deepest gratitude is due for the kindness and interest with which they have met any of my applications in connection with this book.

And last, but not least, I wish to thank my Friend, by whose desire and through whose encouragement it was written.

EDWARD FOTHERGILL.



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# FIVE YEARS IN THE SUDAN

## CHAPTER I

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF PLACE AND PEOPLE

MY first impressions of the Sudan were rather blurred and uncertain ; I was so much more interested in myself than I was in my surroundings. I would, I felt, have plenty of opportunity in the future of viewing the country ; I also felt that if my tongue continued to harden to any great extent, it would certainly rattle against the roof of my mouth as I walked, and this appeared to be a matter of some seriousness.

A drink of some muddy, and very sweet tea, did much to restore my jaded interest, and I stepped out on the shingled platform, to behold Khartoum as it appeared in the year 1901, or three years after the battle of Omdurman and the downfall of the Khalifa. I must confess to a first feeling of disappointment ; as far as I could see the town consisted of a large, white, and somewhat lonely-looking palace ; the famous Gordon College, then a few feet above the ground, and a dingy block of buildings standing some way back from the river in an evidently un-

finished condition. These latter buildings, I was informed, were to be the New War and Administrative offices of the Government. The date palms which lined the river to the west made a welcome break in the monotony of the picture, indeed, even in those days, before the broad avenues of trees, and the plant-surrounded Bungalows which now beautify the city, had made their appearance, it was a picturesque spot enough when once the eye had become accustomed to the scene. The railway had its terminus on the north side of the river in those days, and I recollect thinking, as I stood in the intense morning heat with a burning breeze blowing fine particles of sand in my eyes, that its name of Halfayeh was, with but very little alteration, singularly appropriate. The name has since been altered to the more imposing Khartoum North ; and the place itself is now the headquarters of the Steamers and Boats Department, and is a thriving little town into the bargain, but I shall always remember it as I knew it that first morning years ago, when its atmosphere was of heat and desolation alone.

The boat which was to convey me to Omdurman had not arrived, but sick to death of the train in which I had been slowly cooking for the previous twenty-four hours, I sat on the bank of the Blue Nile and watched the flood's quick descent to join the more stately waters of the White Nile, a mile or so further north. Twenty-four hours' rest at Wady Halfa *en route* for Khartoum, had given me my first glimpse of the Sudanese in their native element, but the

latter town being so indelibly impressed upon my mind as the centre of the romance and drama with which the Sudan had been filled, it was easier to enter into the spirit of the country here than it had been at the frontier station some few hours before. A few Egyptian Effendies in the immediate vicinity of the station, and an occasional passing soldier of the same nationality were all the living evidences of the Occupation which met my eye, but across the river the flags of Britain and Egypt floated proudly side by side on the Sirdar's palace, silent witnesses of the new régime. To my north there spread a limitless sea of sand ; the shining lines of steel which marked the track of the railway, and the telegraph poles running at its side alone hinting at the presence of western civilisation. To the south on the opposite bank of the river lay Khartoum. The front, which is now protected from the ravages of the yearly flood by a sea-wall for the greater part of its length, was at that time, save for a few yards below the palace, entirely bare and unprotected, and each succeeding flood carried away with it huge portions of the crumbling banks. The town boasted no European shops at all.

We had arrived shortly after sunrise, and as, with the exception of the tea to which I have already alluded, I had had no breakfast, I was eagerly looking forward to my arrival in Khartoum, where I imagined that I should be able to procure food before going on to Omdurman. But my dreams of bacon and eggs, and other luxuries dear to the heart of an Englishman,



gave place to a nightmare of hunger and despair when I found how impossible it was for me to carry out my scheme, and I had to fast until a one o'clock luncheon.

Omdurman was at that time the mercantile centre of the Sudan, a few native stalls of the most meagre description constituting the entire sphere of merchandise in the now flourishing capital. Roads were conspicuous by their absence, but already there were evidences of that careful and effective scheme for the laying out of the city on modern and spacious lines, which gives the place its present-day effect of health and beauty. The river bank, and, indeed, the greater part of the town, was infested with mosquitoes; in short, there was but little, either in its appearance or its attributes, to impress the new arrival with any idea of its attractiveness, except the natural beauty of the palm trees to which I have already alluded.

Omdurman, on the other hand, though certainly possessing no claim to beauty, was infinitely more interesting, by reason of the teeming native element which thronged its streets and markets. Here, at least it was possible to gather some idea of the conditions which had prevailed before the battle of Omdurman led to the abrupt termination of the savage and tyrannical rule of the Mahdists; here one still might see the Sudanese plying their trades much in the manner which had been followed ever since the first spark of mechanical and industrial enterprise had been ignited in the country, in the remote days when the name of the Sudan still conveyed little to

the minds of all but a bare handful of interested Englishmen. I have said that it was the centre of mercantile enterprise, and not only was this the case, at the time of which I write it still retained its position as chief port of the Sudan ; the workshops of the Steamers and Boats Department were situated upon its banks, and its trade and general prosperity was, day by day, increasing. The headquarters of the old Gunboat Department, more recently known as the Steamers and Boats Department lay to the northern end of the town, about a mile north of the Bab el Khiblie, and the houses in that district had, therefore, been saved from the general demolition which had laid waste a great portion of the old town upon the arrival of the English. These were now occupied by the artisans and labourers employed in the service of the steamers, or about the dockyard. At the time of my arrival, the Department was busily occupied in the erection of a floating dock, which had been ordered by Lord Kitchener some few months prior to his departure from the country. From early morning until sunset the place rang with the sound of hammer upon steel and iron ; but it may be mentioned here that the native workman lost no time in learning those tricks of the trade which are so popular among his western brethren, and had already discovered that a couple of small boys energetically engaged in hammering away on a sheet of steel, produces quite as much noise as if the whole gang were at their places on the work. Such a method possessed the advantage of being very



much easier. The old steamers, some of which had been steadily in service since the early days of Gordon, were being renovated and altered, and more boats were being added to the fleet, as quickly as the funds at the disposal of the Department would permit. The gunboats, which performed such excellent service at the battle of Kerreri, had lost nothing of their importance in the eyes of the natives, who still regarded them with feelings of wholesome veneration and fear.

Life in the Sukh, or Bazaars, was much the same as it had been in the days which preceded the British Occupation, with, however, a noticeable difference. It was no longer necessary for young women and girls to remain in the seclusion of their homes in order to reduce the risk of being discovered by the lynx-eyed emissaries of the Khalifa, who were under standing orders to seize any of the younger members of the female population who bore pretensions to good looks, and, in the name of the great Prophet Mohammed, to thrust them into their master's already overcrowded harem. The northern Sudanese, though of course professed Mohammedans, have never recognised the law which obtains in other Moslem countries, in relation to the treatment of their women, in so far as they are allowed to pass through the streets unveiled, and are constantly to be met with at every turn, on their journeys to and from the river or wells, for their daily supply of water, or about the Sukh, making their purchases of flour and other necessities of the household. The *Yashmak*

is almost unknown, except in cases where fading beauty has suggested its use as the only remaining method of attracting attention.

Of course, a large number of the women of the Sudan had no higher ambition than to spend the remainder of their days in the harem of the "holy" man who ruled them, but there were many to whom the freedom of everyday existence offered attractions of greater strength, and to these the new régime was far preferable, as under it they could now make their daily rounds of the markets in comparative safety.

Generations passed in the poising of water jars, empty or full, upon their heads, has endowed the Sudanese women with a perfect grace and freedom of movement which is very attractive. Their dress usually consists of two broad sheets of blue or white cotton cloth, one of which is bound round the waist, and falls as a skirt, the other, wrapped round the head and shoulders, does duty as a blouse. This latter garment, however, is frequently either dispensed with altogether, or is hung in such a careless fashion as to lose its character as an article of clothing. They are a good-natured, laughing race, living for the moment, and, untroubled by dreams of women's suffrage, they appear to be supremely happy in the serving of their lords and masters. It cannot, however, be said that considerations of moral virtue play any conspicuous part in the lives of many of the inhabitants of at least the more northern districts of the Sudan. It would, indeed, be surprising if the case were otherwise, since the whole teaching,

or at least example of the Mahdi, and of his still more vicious successor, the Khalifa, could by no stretch of imagination, be termed moral. Vice of the most flagrant description was a matter of everyday occurrence, and, I think I am justified in asserting that absolute connubial fidelity was practically unknown. It is true that the violation of matrimonial vows seldom occurred among families who were on terms of mutual friendship ; but little or no notice was apparently extended to sin, should the offender be a stranger, and more especially should he be of European blood. A like code of morality is, I believe, not uncommon among semi-savage races who have been under the ban of such conquerors as the Turks, who carry the theory that " might alone is right " even to the most intimate questions of domestic life. It must also be admitted that the average Englishman, following easily along the lines which he found prepared for him, made any immediate stamping out of this evil a matter of great difficulty.

The native, quite amenable to a new law when he is satisfied that a return to the old is out of the question, is shrewd enough to resent hypocrisy of any description, and treats ideals, which, while preached, are without support in practice, with scant attention. The Mohammedan religion, too, in recognising the mere desire or fancy on the part of the husband as sufficient justification for the granting of a peremptory divorce, must take its share in the responsibility for the moral lassitude which prevails in the Sudan. There are, of course, innumerable cases in which

women are happily married, and pass the remainder of their lives as honoured wives and mothers, but on the other hand, the ceremony of marriage, at least in so far as it applies to the female, carries with it no guarantee of permanency whatever. A hundred reasons may crop up which, to the mind of the husband, are good and sufficient on which to base his application for divorce; and divorce he gets; his rejected wife, in being repaid her marriage portion, is considered to have received ample compensation for the separation. What wonder then that, living perpetually on the brink of a volcano, and entirely subject to the passing whim of their husbands, in so far as the solidity of the marriage bond is concerned, they are prone to regard a moral lapse more in the light of an incident than a sin? And here, again, in the question of divorce, the Englishman is not always above taking advantage of a system which is, or ought to be, entirely foreign to his principles, in order to secure to himself a temporary mate.

Happily, such occurrences are not frequent, and, during my residence in the Sudan, I came across two Englishmen only, who had contracted marriages with native women. Curiously enough, both these men are now, I believe, married to wives of their own nationality. I am not quite clear as to what constitutes marriage in the eyes of the English law, and what does not, but as in neither of the above cases does there appear to have been any formal divorce of the coloured wife before the second marriage was made, I presume that the fact of one of the



contracting parties being a Mohammedan, and the ceremony having been performed according to Mohammedan rights only, nullifies the contract as far as English law is concerned, for it is hardly probable that the question as to the legitimacy of possible children could have been overlooked.

There are very few of the Sudanese women of Khartoum, and other northern stations, who regard living with a white man in any other light than that of an honour, and in the early days of the English Occupation of the country there were but few white men in settled positions who failed to confer it. To become the mother of a fair-skinned child is an event which is eagerly look forward to ; there is no stigma attached to it in the minds of the people, and frequently the lack of such a child is regarded more as a disgrace than as a virtue. The girls marry when they are very young ; I have frequently known them married at the age of ten years and mothers at eleven. The birth of a man-child as the first-born is the ambition of every Sudanese man or woman. Later, the birth of a female is welcomed, on account of the marriage portion which will be paid to her parents when she finds a husband, but it is considered to be a slur on the honour of the parents if the first child should be of the weaker sex.

There are all shades of feminine beauty to be found in the native quarters of Omdurman, from the lightest yellow to ebony black. Among the children there is a still greater range of colour ; many of the bare-footed little scallywags which one sees on the beach



Photo by G. B. Middleton

A HAPPY SUDANESE COOK





at Omdurman have hair of gold ; many of them have complexions of the purest white. It is in one way a pitiful thing to see these offspring of western pioneers left untended to assimilate the characters and defects of their mothers' race ; but I think that if such things must be at all, it is the wiser plan to leave them from the first, rather than run the risk of blighting the happiness of a future generation by removing them to Europe. I know of one case where this latter course has been taken ; the child was left to her mother until she was five years old, and then sent to England, to be brought up as an English girl. She is as fair-skinned as the fairest daughter of England, but her mother was a coal-black Sudanie, and it is terrible to think of the possible results which may occur in the future should the child marry a white man under the cloak of her fair skin.

The men, as members of a race recently subject to the rule of despots who lacked all the essential principles of either labour or routine, struck me as being particularly smart and intelligent, and subsequent observations did nothing to alter my opinions on this point. I have heard it argued that they are both obstinate and lazy, and this statement, while perhaps bearing more than a modicum of truth, has always struck me as being an exaggerated and unfair description of the true native of the Sudan. Admitting that they are not altogether untroubled by laziness ; that the majority of them would prefer a life of unchequered ease spent among their families,

or drowsing away their hours on the banks of the Nile, to a life which calls them to their work with the rising sun, and which apports their daily bread, their much-loved finery, and even the number of their wives, to the sweat of their labour; admitting this, I say, I still fancy, with distinct visions of sturdy corduroy-clad giants before my eyes, that the race, in this predilection, is not altogether original.

Again, there is the accusation of obstinacy levied against them; but, in my opinion, they are obstinate only under circumstances where it ceases to be a fault. They hate being interfered with, and have no use for the man who gives an order, and then alters his mind concerning it half a dozen times in as many minutes. Let them once understand what is required of them, and, the first few minutes over, they will go through with it like men. I have seen a gang working for fourteen hours on end, hard at it, and with never a murmur or a hint at the fatigue which they must have experienced.

The spirit of emulation is strong within them, and frequently the difficulty lies, not in getting them to do a thing, but in getting them to leave it alone. And in regard to those trades where deftness of touch and a capacity for thought is necessary to secure their successful accomplishment, one visit to the bazaars, where the cotton weaver, the jeweller, and the goldsmith may be seen at work, would be sufficient to convince the greatest doubter that the Sudanese lack neither brains nor ingenuity. With implements so crude that they would be most cer-

tainly cast aside as useless by any European goldsmith or jeweller, the native of the Sudan turns out the most delicate filigree work, often to a pattern of his own design, with a rapidity that is amazing. His stock-in-trade consists more often than not of a heavy-headed hammer, an anvil of local and rough work, and a melting-pot. He is, indeed, a perfect example of patience and industry combined, and an ever-present refutation to accusations of indolence and brainlessness.

Such were the impressions which, broadly speaking, I formed regarding the people of the Sudan, and I must confess that the people—in the first instance—struck me as being more agreeable than their country.

My bed, on that first night, was laid on the top deck of a steamer, under the naked sky, and I remember that even as I fell asleep, with only the occasional sound of a tom-tom in the distance, or the bark of a village dog as it greeted the rising moon, my sensations had already begun to blend themselves to the magic influences of Africa, the Africa of the African. My feelings, however, when I waked suddenly, somewhere in the early hours of the morning, to find myself half-blinded by a particularly violent sand-storm, which was doing its best to rob me of all the scanty bed-clothes which I possessed, can be better imagined than described.

Dragging my bed in my wake, I tumbled down to a cabin where the temperature ranged cheerfully at anything between 100° and 1000°, and there, in the company of innumerable mosquitoes, who,

like myself, had been driven to shelter, I passed the remainder of the night, to wake the next morning with my face scarred almost beyond recognition by the fond attentions of my energetic companions of the cabin.



## CHAPTER II

### OMDURMAN AND THE MAHDI'S TOMB

WHEN, shortly after the battle of Omdurman, a certain worthy Sudanese mechanic was handed a sovereign as payment for a month's services, he took it, gazed at it for some time, and then laughed and returned it, apparently thinking that he was the victim of a practical joke. The idea that it was truly to be his, because he had earned it, never entered his head. He had worked at the same job for years, first as the slave of the Mahdi, and, later, of the Khalifa, with no recompense other than grain (when it was plentiful) in sufficient quantity to keep himself and his family in comparative comfort; to be one day the actual possessor of hard cash was a dream which had never entered his head. But notwithstanding this, it did not take a very long time to convince him of his good fortune, and next pay-day found him, shining and expectant, the first to greet the cashier when he arrived with the money. That first day, when money was thrust upon an uncomprehending native, was one of great importance to the Sudan, for it marked the initial stage of renewed prosperity. It was then that the small Greek traders began to reap the reward of the patient



endurance which had characterised their long and dreary sojourn in the country. Hitherto poor as the poorest Arab, they slowly accumulated money as it worked its way to their stalls through the hands of the prospering artisans and labourers. Little by little, they were able to replenish their mouldering stock, and to purchase new luxuries in the shape of the sweetmeats and so forth, that are so dear to the heart of the native. As a result of their thrift and enterprise, they now, in these latter days, control nearly all the mercantile trade in the Sudan. Many had been left in the country at the time of the death of Gordon; others followed the British troops as they worked their way through the burning desert to erase that blot from the pages of English history; all were seemingly possessed of wonderful endurance, and a still more wonderful power of producing cool soda water from hot sand! Alone of all the traders who essayed to make the Sudan their goal, the Greek remained; and his foothold once established, the rest was comparatively easy. To the very best of his ability he anticipated the wants of his English patrons; if it were possible to gratify them it was done at once, and at the same time he was not above dealing with his native clients in sums which a less enduring, or more fastidious race would have scorned.

They are not without their faults, these Greek traders, but at least it can be said that their presence in the Sudan in the early days was wellnigh indispensable to the British officers and troops; and, if in the latter times of plenty they have shown a

tendency to accelerate their wealth by a little smuggling of the rankest of all rank spirits into the hands of the natives, they have borne too much at the hands of both the country and its inhabitants to make the offence an unforgivable one. The more prosperous of the Greeks are, of course, entirely without this little weakness, and are, indeed, the backbone of the commercial Sudan.

It was to the shop of one of these Greeks that I repaired on the first day of my arrival, to make the necessary purchases for a trip up the Nile. My orders were that I was to return within the month, but the officer from whom I took my instructions, supplemented them by a wholesome bit of verbal advice, " You never know what will happen, so you'd better lay in a stock for six months." Therefore, as soon as the sun became fairly passive in the west, I borrowed a horse and rode to Capato ; and the first part of the evening was full of humiliation. It must be understood that I was riding in a very loose pair of flannel trousers ; the horse I rode had not been out for several days, and was determined to enjoy himself ; and the saddle on which I was seated was the first one that I had ever known without knee pads. Therefore, we went much further into the desert than I intended, and I arrived at my destination in a bath of perspiration, and feeling very much " done " indeed. Looking at it calmly now, I think that it was forgivable, but I did not think so then. I was young ; I was English, and I was, therefore, one of the lords of creation ; and yet, those

infernal niggers *must* have known that I was going where I did not want to go, when I galloped out into the setting sun, with my trousers rucked up above my knees, and one foot out of the stirrup.

It is astonishing how difficult it is to provide for one's self, if one is not used to doing so; I must have spent a good hour hard at work, trying to decide what to buy and what not to buy, and when I saw the boxes laden with my provisions being hauled on board the next day, it seemed to me that I had surely purchased a little of everything, for there appeared to be no end to the number of cases. I had erred on the right side, however, and I subsequently had every reason to be thankful for this, when familiarity with the country led me to a contempt of its possibilities; had it not been for a few remaining tins of vegetables and fruit, bought that first day, I should have been forced to live on the meat of the hippopotamus alone.

My appointment to the Sudan had been very unexpected; I had tried, and failed to secure the position in former days, and on my way back to the steamer from the market I heard, for the first time, of the occurrence which had led to my sudden appointment now. A month previously there had been no immediate prospect of a vacancy, and the post that I now occupied had been held by a young Englishman, "one of the best," said my informant, but a man who had not been built for solitude. The insidious companionship of liquor had taken him in its relentless grip, and the end had been speedy. Returning from a prolonged trip up the White Nile

and in actual sight of Khartoum, he had been overcome by who knows what sense of despair or degradation, and, locking himself in his cabin, had put the muzzle of his rifle into his mouth and ended an existence which appeared to have no further use for him. Thus another Englishman had gone to swell the numbers of those who have given their lives in answer to the appeal of the ever-hungry Sudan. It was not a glorious death perhaps, but who shall say that any life is given in vain, and it may well be that the picture of that life which had gone under, was not without its effect upon those who, in later days, were tempted to apply to the brandy or whisky bottle, when the gloom of the great black swamps lay heavily upon their minds, and life seemed to hold but little other attraction than that which lay in the glittering gold of the liquid so near at hand; which held at least the magic power of inducing sleep and forgetfulness? An extended knowledge of the country is gradually but surely reducing the number of small white crosses which, year by year, rise to mark the last resting-place of the white man, slain by the murderous desolation of the country, by the touch of its fevers, or by the hands of its inhabitants.

Even the seemingly indestructible mosquito is now losing his hold on the country, at least in those districts where the white men gather and form their towns; but to the south there still remains some two hundred thousand square miles of swamp to be reckoned with, and still on its borders the white man pitches his tent, east and west, and north and



south of it, and labours untiringly that the blood of his fellows shall not have been shed in vain.

I heard the tale of the dead as we rode slowly down the uneven track which led to the river. On either side there crumbled the ruins of that wall which had, such a very short time before, been the pride of the Mahdists, the centre of their power, and the home of tyranny and fanaticism. The past was all very near ; it seemed but a week since I had heard my father reading aloud the telegram which had caused a shudder to run through England, as it was realised that the stains of indecision and delay had left an indelible mark on the page of history at last, and that one of the most fearless men of our time had died a victim to the quibbling hesitancy of the Government which had sent him forth to his doom. " Khartoum Fallen," " Gordon Dead "—the head-lines stood out distinctly against the silver of the sky to-night, yet the reign of his murderers was over, and around me lay the ruins of the city they had raised.

Late that night, or, rather, it was late for the Sudan, about half-past nine, I left my boat after an excellent dinner and wandered up towards the Sukh. The portion of the town near the river was absolutely still, but as I neared the market-place a figure would start suddenly out of the darkness close at hand, and pass, barefooted and silent, along the road. Round the wells belated water-carriers still gathered, gossiping as they filled their jars, and, gradually, as I walked on, sound became more general, and the glare of lights informed me that I was nearing the Piccadilly

Circus of Omdurman. No sooner had I made my appearance in the large square, where people of all colours, grades, and conditions congregate at night, than I was besieged by dozens of yelling donkey-boys, but as I knew only two words of Arabic at that time, *moyyah* and *berema*, which mean respectively, water, and cork-screw, and as the boys, on the other hand, lacked even this amount of English, it is doubtful, though we talked a lot, whether we were any the wiser for our endeavours. I was tired, and I thought it would be a good idea to ride back, and I wanted to tell a boy with a good donkey to wait for me. However, I decided at last that it would be probably less tiring if I walked. And I was glad afterwards that I had done so, for I shall never forget the glory of the night as the moon rose on the stillness. I was walking home, and I was in a much better position to appreciate it on foot than I would have been on a donkey several sizes too small—they are all like that in the Sudan—and with a small boy keeping up a perpetual chorus of encouragement in the rear. Eventually I got so used to the donkeys of the country that I attained a high proficiency in the art of simply stepping off when the donkey fell beneath me, but that was only after repeated disasters in most of the public places of Omdurman.

Coming suddenly into this crowded, noisy square, from the comparative silence of the lane which leads to it from the river, was like emerging from the subway at the Bank into one of London's most busy thoroughfares. The cafés were still teeming with life,



and I sat down at one of these for a few minutes before returning to the boat. Most of the people were playing *towler*, a Greek game, very similar to backgammon, but here and there one would see a family quietly talking together as they sipped their coffee. One of these families caught my attention at once, and again the history of the Sudan rose insistently before my eyes. For the father was a Greek, a trader who had been left in the country when it fell into the clutches of the Mahdi, and the mother was a Sudanie of the very blackest type. The children were nondescript, some of them very dark-skinned, some of them more Greek than Sudanese in appearance. Everyone was forced to marry under the rule of the Mahdi, and a poor Greek could not choose, he would be lucky if he escaped being given one of the less desirable women of the town to wife. There could be no refusal; it was the will of the Mahdi.

One of the greatest attractions of the Sudan lies in the fact that the nights are seldom so hot as to interfere with one's rest, and to-night as I neared the river, I felt that I had seldom been out in such a perfect atmosphere. A light breeze had sprung up since I left the boat earlier in the evening; cool and life-giving, it fanned the last heat of the day from the face of the earth, leaving it refreshed and still. The moon was as yet too weak to dim the brightness of the glittering canopy of stars, which shed their silver points of light upon a tranquil, happy people, only recently rescued from the horrors of a rule which

relied upon the fear which it inspired as its only safety, and upon its cruelty as its only strength. The place was seemingly absolutely deserted, and it was with a start that the call of a sentry aroused me to a realisation of present circumstances as I reached my boat. I called my boy to bring me a drink, forgetting for the moment that my beloved Hassan had departed, and that I was left to the mercies of a servant who could not understand a single word I uttered. Hassan, the boy whom I had brought up from Alexandria with me, and whose chief virtue lay in the fact that he could speak my language, had been promptly taken away from me by a well-meaning friend, who assured me that the only way in which to learn the language of the country, was to have Arabic-speaking attendants about me. I had not the remotest idea where the whisky was, so after much searching I found my vocabulary, and hunted the word out, only to find in the end that it was the same in Arabic as it was in English.

I dreamed that night that I was walking a field strewn with mutilated dead, while innumerable crowds of donkey boys strove to revive the corpses with whisky.

Omdurman is equally fascinating by daytime, in its savage, barbaric sort of manner. As a capital of one of the largest dominions in the world, it is distinctly disappointing, when one considers that the Mahdi and the Khalifa had so many white men constant prisoners for years. I almost expected to see a city which would bear some resemblance,

however slight, to the lesser towns of Europe, but with the exception of a few buildings with corrugated iron roofs, the town had been run up anyhow, and the Khalifa's house itself was of the meanest description. If evidence were needed to prove the degrading influence which the Khalifa had upon the subjects whom he ruled, the state of the town at his death would be sufficient to convince the most doubting. The Sudanese have, as I have already said, the imitative faculty strongly developed, and had already made marvellous strides in the direction of civilisation, even at the time of my arrival, a very short time after the downfall of Mahdism.

It always amused me when I caught a glimpse of my servant's box ; it contained nearly all his worldly possessions, but it was a model of neatness and colour. All the coloured pictures from the various magazines which I had discarded were carefully cut out and put away ; the more glaring, usually those of startling females, were nailed to the inside of the cover, and he had therefore only to open his box to have his picture gallery before his eyes. At the time when I first arrived in the Sudan I was the victim of a pernicious habit of wearing red socks constantly ; the rest of my costume, including my helmet and boots, was entirely white. One morning my breakfast was very late. I made as searching an inquiry into the cause as my limited command of the language would permit, and satisfied myself that the cook had not returned from the Sukh. I also gathered from various gesticulations indulged in by my smaller boy, that



my precious *chef* was engaged in buying clothes for his own adornment. Fuming, I awaited his arrival, but when at last he appeared at the top of the bank my fury left me ; he was funny enough to deserve forgiveness. He *had* been making purchases, and what is more, he had stayed in the shop to change into his new finery. He walked majestically down towards the boat, swinging a cane. His tarboosh had been discarded for a turban of white, he wore a short white coat of European cut, the loose white drawers of the country, brilliant red socks, and white shoes ; indeed, as far as I could see, we differed only in that he bore a much-used dish-cloth in the hand unoccupied by the cane. A few yards behind him laboured a small boy, carrying a basket which bristled with promises of food at last. Judging from the size of the basket, and the apparent weight of its contents, there was food sufficient to feed a battalion, and there was truly enough to keep a large family in plenty ; the Sudanese cook is not always provident where another man's pockets are concerned. But the real Sudanie is a good servant, and, after all, food was very cheap in those days, before the demand was anything like equal to the supply. Even in Omdurman, where things were comparatively expensive, one could buy good fresh eggs for a small piastre, or a penny a dozen, They were small, but they were wholesome, though in consequence of their plentifulness, one met eggs at every meal, until at last it became necessary for me to impose a fine if they appeared in any form that I could recognise them in, more than once a day.

My first servant was a willing boy enough, but he certainly lacked enterprise in his work, and would have been perfectly happy had I only wished to live on from day to day without a change of menu. Crème caramel was a very favourite dish of his, and I loved it at first. It is a very popular dish everywhere in Egypt and the Sudan, and I have never known it cooked to such perfection as when by a native cook. But a few months of crème caramel, and practically nothing else in the way of sweets, sufficeth any man ; it more than sufficed for me, and even to this day the memory of it has not departed, and it is the only sweet that I have met that I cannot eat now.

As I was to leave for the South the next day, I spent the latter portion of my first day in wandering about the town, with my boy as guide. We went up to the Mahdi's tomb first ; I suppose he thought that that was the proper place to take a loyal Englishman to begin with. It looked desolate enough in its ruined isolation, and it was very evident from the filth of its surroundings, that it was not regarded with much sentiment by the native of that generation, anyway ; I have seldom been in a more nauseous enclosure than that which surrounded the erstwhile resting-place of the Sudan's chosen Mahdi. The corpse, of course, had gone ; exhumed by the conquerors, it had been cast into the river, and for all we know was carried away by the rising flood to find its last resting-place in the sea. The body was snatched from its tomb by the deliberate order of those in authority, and the monument which had risen to



its honour knew the bones of the dead no more. It was done in cold blood ; it was done after due consideration ; and with all my heart I say that the doing of the thing was right. I had heard of the work while in England, and I had perhaps regarded it as a blot on a career of brilliance and of mercy, but under the sun of the Sudan the incident assumed a truer light, as in native surroundings the veil of sentiment was raised, and the stern demands of circumstance and necessity stood stark before my eyes. It is so easy to sit at home and criticise ; it is so easy to accord the patronage of one's approbation, and still more easy to allocate the blame. Oh, you man in the street, you will have much to answer for when the history of England is passed for review before the meditative gaze of future generations ! Never has England been so ignorantly callous to her own interests as she is in the present century. Perhaps this ignorance is the more noticeable since a cheap Press has voiced the opinions of those men who, in former days, were left to whine unheeded ; those hysterical productions of latter days, the individuals who would cramp the Empire into the petty sphere of their own suburban gardens if only such a thing were practicable, and who are ever on the watch for an opportunity to raise their dismal howls on high in condemnation of the nation which—Heaven pity it—gave them birth. Loyalty and devotion are words which have been omitted from their vocabulary ; pride of race, they know it not ; and they are never happy unless they are championing the cause

of a coloured "brother" of whom they know less than nothing, or damning the actions of any Englishman who dares to act with the spirit of his forefathers.

Of all the presumably educated men in Parliament, who added their voices to the outcry which was raised against Kitchener, when a rumour of the violation of the Mahdi's tomb became known in England, how many had ever seen a black man in his native element, how many had even taken the trouble to read the whole miserable story of the Sudan right through? I guarantee that there was a very small percentage of either. "Oh, let us be humane," they cry, as they lounge smugly through their lives at home. "Oh, let us be humane and brotherly." Yes, my friends; but go and talk to your brethren in their stronghold; sit by the embers of a smouldering fanaticism, and carry your precepts into effect with your dearly beloved there. Pat the native on the back as you explain to him that, after all, you are no better than he; shake the black man by the hand, and watch the dawn of his contempt, and continue your smiles if you dare. Go out and carry your doctrines into the dead sea shores of savagery for a few short years, and then go home and continue your preaching as you will.

But to return to the Mahdi. He was, it must be remembered, a prophet, the chosen one of God. His relics were coveted as relics of a Deity; his tomb was the indestructible resting-place of a man with superhuman gifts. Such was the belief in the Sudan when thirty thousand men rushed into the teeth of

destruction on the battlefield of Kerreri, dying to preserve the integrity of their belief. They were beaten, and those who remained of the hosts which had gone forth to the fight, admitted their defeat, and greeted the British troops, on their arrival at the capital, with every token of friendship: "The King is dead, long live the King!" But it would have been absurd to imagine that the satisfied fanaticism of a decade would, or indeed, could, die in a few short hours. The mastery of the moment had been gained, but it was necessary to stamp out with as heavy a tread as possible, every remnant of the superstition which had made the reconquest of the Sudan a necessity. There was, practically speaking, no bloodshed after the last stand had been made on the field of Kerreri; I am speaking now of the days which immediately followed that decisive battle, and not, of course, of the later times, when the Khalifa made one last futile attempt to regain his fallen prestige. It was simply a clear march through into the late stronghold of the enemy, but there was a risk, one of absolute necessity, I admit, but still, there was a risk in the very moderation displayed by our troops on their entry to the town. For the savage is not accustomed to moderation on the part of victorious armies, and the Sudanese, when the troops entered their city that day, were nothing more or less than savages pure and simple.

It turned out all right; a steady eye will do much to hold primitive nature in check; but there is no gainsaying the fact that, not once, but fre-



quently, our men were in positions of the gravest risk ; there were times when threatening looks were cast by hundreds of men upon the small bands of English in various parts of the town. But these small bands passed through the heart of the city unheeding ; conscious though they assuredly were that by staying their hands they increased the danger of an attack, they marched through the town more like bands of tourists than the units of a conquering army. Kitchener knew how far to go in his moderation, but he also knew when it was time to disclose the iron hand. He chose to prevent the possibility of further bloodshed, by turning his attention to the dead, rather than to the destruction of the living. The Mahdi's tomb was said to be indestructible ; he had made it understood before his death that it would be so. In addition to this, it stood, the symbol of revolt, an ever-present incentive to future rebellion in the name of religion. The gunboats pounded it with shells from the river, and the glory of its dome was destroyed ; but under the débris lay the body of the prophet, the Mahdi of the elect.

Consider the situation. A few short hours before a horde of men, constituting practically the whole population of the Sudan, had been ready and willing to lay down their lives in the memory of this man whose bones lay mouldering in Omdurman. Superior forces of arms and civilisation had devastated their army, and obliged them to acknowledge defeat, but was it likely that of the thousands who remained, there were many who did not still burn

with the fire of a lingering fanaticism, who would not have turned the tables on their victors had they been able? They had suffered defeat, but their belief in the Mahdi was not yet dead, and their sympathies were all against the conquerors. They regarded the forbearance of the victorious hosts with an ever-increasing wonder; not thus would the entry into a defeated capital have been made had the victory been on the other side; death was the legitimate penalty of defeat, death to man, woman, and child, that is to say, to all who lacked sufficient attractions of personal beauty to recommend them to a lustful clemency.

And so it came about that a vigorous step had to be taken to prevent the possibility of an immediate relapse into rebellion, and the demolition of the Mahdi's tomb promised, not only to safeguard our army from any suspicion of weakness; it also promised to destroy much religious sentiment, which would constitute our chief danger in future days. It was therefore decided that the body of the so-called prophet must be removed, and his tomb desecrated. The natives heard of the decision, and sullenly they watched for its fulfilment. Would the Christians dare? Yes, they dared: and it is to that act, cruel, terrible though it may seem to be, that we owe the many years of comparative quiet which have marked the progress of events in the Sudan since that day.

The Mahdi had promised a place of pilgrimage that would last for ever; the object of the pilgrimage



was cast to swiftly-flowing waters, and the tomb which had held it crumbled to the earth under the fire of avenging guns. Therefore the Mahdi lied ; was his power so wonderful after all ? The seed of doubt planted by the incident germinated with rapidity. As it was seen that Heaven made no sign, the Sudanese left the ruins of the tomb to decay, and forgot the sentiment which had engendered its erection. I repeat—the thing was right ; it was a necessary act—of barbarism if you will—but destined to put the final restraint upon that genuine barbarism which we had poured forth both blood and money to check. Among civilised races such an action would be unthinkable, impossible ; but we were not dealing with a civilised race, and the end has fully justified the means.

So desolate was the place on the day that I first saw it, that it was hard to realise that it had once been the centre of the Sudan's endeavour, the jewel that thousands of men had cheerfully given up their lives to guard. But within a few yards of the tomb itself, on a wall outside the enclosure, there is a well-polished plate of brass, set to the memory of the Hon. Hubert Howard, special correspondent to *The Times*, through the expedition, who was killed by a stray shot from one of our own gunboats just as dusk was falling on the day that gave us back the Sudan—and our honour.

Here was the reminder to call wandering thoughts to a sense of the reality of war ; here was the reminder, grim, and silent and real. I do not know why it should be that the isolated cases of destruction are ever more prone to make one think than a

visit to a battlefield where thousands of human bones lie rotting beneath the empty sky. Perhaps one's soul is yet too small to appreciate the devastation of slaughter, while the solitary death is the thing that we have all known, and knowing, have learned to respect. A reader will glance through the account of an explosion, or of a fire at which hundreds have perished, with scarcely more than a passing thought "how terrible," but they will read the news of a solitary man or woman who has been knocked over or killed in the street, or who died from some like cause, with a quiver of pity; it is there, it may happen to us any day, but with the other it is past and over, and the world is running on the same old beaten track once more. And so it was that the sight of that brass plate glittering in the sunlight brought with it a realisation more poignant than the clanking chains at Halfa, the ruined city of Omdurman, had done, and I grasped the meaning of war for the moment to the full.

Close at hand there stood the house of the Khalifa itself, now the residence of a British officer, and a poor quarter enough it made. Lord! what a country to fight for, what a harvest of tares to reap! But still, I liked it—desolate, forsaken, forlorn Omdurman; I liked it then, and when, some five years later, the fever of its provinces was driving me an exile from the land, I liked it still. For it lives in a bath of red-gold sun, and in the shadow and the silence of its more deserted districts there is a charm that is not to be met with elsewhere. It is

not the charm of Egypt, for there is nothing of age in its ruins of sun-dried brick, there is nothing of art in its crumbling walls ; but there is the presence of that voice which lives only in the wildest, most desolate spots of nature, the voice which repeats the well-worn words so familiar to us in our childhood : " As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen."

It gives one the impression that the passing of the ages has been productive of but little change, and in this I think lies its fascination, for we of the new generation have grown so immune to change that we pass it by unheeded, even though it may be laying the foundations of a wonderful future. Further south there is the constant hum of the insect world, and though it would be hard to locate it, the air is really never uncharged by sound ; here, however, even in the daytime it was possible to stand in a silence that was absolute, a silence that the drone of a wandering insect would be sufficient to break with a suddenness that was almost painful, like a discord breaking into one of the melodies of the great masters. It fascinated me immensely that first day ; but life and sound were far more to the taste of my guide, and he evidently began to wish that he had not led me into the temptation of this spot, for he became very restless and, as far as I could understand, intimated that there were other places of far greater interest close at hand.

At last I followed him, and in a very few minutes we were in the heart of the native city again, with



its water carriers, its donkey boys, its chattering women, and its silent-footed camels passing to and fro with grain. There were many lower-class Greeks and Levantines about, but during the whole time that I was out that afternoon I did not see a single Englishman; the place might still have been in the hands of the Sudanese for all one saw of the new rulers. Occasionally, it is true, we passed an Egyptian soldier in the uniform of his army, and when we did see him it always struck me that he was walking about more as though he was an intruder than as if he was actually the master of the situation. As a matter of fact, the Sudanese have never regarded the Egyptians as their masters, or their conquerors either. They look upon them as an inferior race, a race that would long ago have been overcome by the troops of Mahdism had it not been for foreign intervention and assistance. The Egyptians, we are told, fought splendidly at the capture of the Sudan, and I can quite believe this to be true, for they were fighting with the British to lead them, and they placed an implicit trust in their commanders. But the Egyptian officer is, I should imagine, far too vacillating a person to inspire confidence himself, and he is certainly the last man in the world whom I should imagine to be capable of leading a savage, or half-savage race, who are acutely susceptible to the slightest suspicion of hesitancy, and who invariably regard it as the sign manual of weakness.

Of course, I speak from the point of view of an amateur. I have never seen the Egyptian officer

lead his men into battle, and I may be doing him a grave injustice ; but I have seen him attempting to quiet a petty squabble among men who were under him, and the sight is not an altogether edifying one. If only he could be brought to appreciate the fact that something more than a raised voice is required in order to instil respect into the minds of his followers he might be a very useful man indeed, but from the many opportunities I had of judging during the time I spent in the Sudan, it always seemed to me that the beginning and end of his disciplinary powers lay in the hurling of loud-voiced epithets at the object of his wrath, and when this method failed to produce the desired effect, he would let the thing slide, thereby nullifying any respect which his subordinates might have felt for him formerly.

After leaving the tomb we passed through the big mosque square in which the Dervish army paraded, and which had been built presumably as a refuge in the event of an attack on the city. If this, indeed, had been the intention, it failed lamentably in its object, as there was not a single loophole by which the besieged forces could attack the enemy, though they arrived at the very base of the stronghold. As a matter of fact, it was, of course, never used, the great fighting force of the Khalifa, through a miracle of bad generalship, having been poured on to the British guns on the open field of Kerreri. In consideration of the almost certain fact that they were predestined to defeat by the improved and modern weapons of war which were in our possession, and



as annihilation alone would have satisfied their religious fervour, it is well perhaps that they should have committed this fatal error, for a resistance from out the warrens of Omdurman would, while perhaps not altering the final result—Kitchener was far too well prepared for that—have entailed enormous loss on our side and have prolonged the expedition considerably.

Passing through the square, we came into one of the main streets leading to the Sukh, and it struck me then, as it has often struck me since, how astonishingly soon the native becomes used to the presence of the white man. A white man strolling about the market of Omdurman in those days was a very much more unusual sight than that of a black man strolling about the streets of London in these, yet the former sight attracted far less attention in Omdurman than the latter does in London. The white man had come to stay, and let him turn up when or where he would, his arrival was treated as a matter of everyday occurrence. The only difference which one noticed was that the native who was mounted, on donkey or horseback, it mattered not, would unostentatiously slide off at the approach of the Englishman and wait until he had passed before remounting. That was, of course, before the civil Judge had come to ask the contented native if he was unhappy, and to intimate gently that if he were not it was high time that he developed a grievance; it was before the time when the native would jostle the European in the streets and at the railway stations; it was, in

fact, before the time that England had begun her well-worn methods of idiocy in treating the native as a spoilt child.

There is nothing which speaks so highly for the capabilities of the individual Englishman to colonise successfully, as the manner in which he manages to scrape through the difficulties which are constantly being thrust in his way by his own Government, which appears to think that one or two years' training under the British flag is more than sufficient to alter the whole structure of a savage's character. The change of policy is, of course, usually worked by some official who has stepped into a position of authority after everything has calmed down. It is, perhaps, small blame to him if he is unable to appreciate the conditions which formerly obtained among the docile and well-behaved people for whom he is called upon to legislate. The blame is not with the individual so much as with the system which permits it. But, after all, we blunder through it somehow, and at least there is seldom any hesitation if we are called upon to display the iron hand. The administration of the Sudan up to and beyond the time of my arrival had been entirely military; the result was that the white men were supreme—there was no doubt about it—though I defy anyone to lay their hand upon a specific case of cruelty committed by an Englishman in a position of responsibility. Change has crept into every branch of the Sudan since those days, but of that I will speak later.

At that time the native was respectful and un-

spoilt; the stall-holder would rise with a courteous gesture as you approached his stall, and though even in those days he was quite capable of driving a ruinous bargain with the unsuspecting stranger, he never for one instant forgot the line which divided the black from the white. I made a few purchases in the bazaars, and regretted doing so afterwards when I found that I could get the same sort of thing, only better and probably more genuine, up country for an eighth of the price. However, experience must be bought, and though I sometimes blush to think what a veritable babe I must have seemed to the vendor, I recover myself when I consider that, year by year, the country is flooded with innocents as great as myself. The one thing that I thought I was particularly knowing about I lost, and have regretted it ever since. It was a tusk, very small, but beautifully carved, from, I believe, the Congo Free State. The owner, after much haggling, came down to a sovereign for it, but, thinking I would be able to get it on my return for something like half the money, I left it, and, of course, by that time the thing was gone, and I never saw such a good one for sale again.

I finished up my afternoon at the big café owned by a Greek named Louiso, where I drank a sweet drink called "roman" with great relish; and as I looked out on to the movement and colour of the square in front of me it seemed as though the yashmak of the East was being raised before my eyes, and I was glad that I had been born.

## CHAPTER III

### FROM KHARTOUM TO TAUFIKIER

THE next morning I left Omdurman. My orders then were to proceed with stores and mails direct to Lado, in the Congo enclave, returning to Omdurman in about a month. Accompanying me for the first part of the journey was Sir Rudolph von Slatin Pasha, who, after the many vicissitudes of his life, was now Inspector-General in the country where he had passed so many weary years in captivity. "Salitin" Pasha, as the natives call him, is a short, fair man, with an extraordinarily youthful appearance considering all that he has passed through. He was to come on board with his staff at Khartoum, but the principal complement of men and stores were embarked at the south gate of Omdurman (Bab el Khiblie). It was there that I first saw the one side of the native character which I hated until the day I left the Sudan years afterwards—the noisy side. It is as impossible to describe as it is impossible to forget. To begin with, everyone, of course, talked at once, and talked at the top of their voices; the men shouted to the women, and the women yelled in reply. I was to take up a party of woodcutters, who were to be dropped at a wooding





*Rudolph Slatin*  
*1910.*

SIR RUDOLPH BARON VON SLATIN PASHA, K.C.M.G., C.V.O., C.B.  
Inspector-General of the Sudan





station some couple of hundred miles south ; they were going up there to stay, with their wives and their children, their goats and their poultry, and all their household belongings to boot. I did not object to the household goods—they were, at least, silent when once they had been placed in the desired position on the barges alongside the steamer ; of the rest I don't quite know which were the worst, the women or the poultry. They were so inextricably mixed that it was impossible to say which really made the most noise. I think that, individually perhaps, the honours of the day lay with the former, for, though they were greatly in the minority, they succeeded in holding their own. Every woman who appeared was carrying as many screeching chickens head down as she could possibly manipulate ; the children, and their name was legion, carried as great a number as they could manage ; the result was a sort of devils' concert which haunts my dreaming yet. Above this deafening racket the deep-voiced bellowing of the men, who naturally resented being overpowered in this manner, rose in tones of triumphant bass. Every two minutes one of my sailors would conduct someone up to speak to me, regardless of the fact that I could not understand a word he said. Presumably, and judging from later experiences, they were all brimful of wrongs, imagined or otherwise, and came to me for redress ; if this was the case, I fear that they got but scant attention, for after about a quarter of an hour of it all, I took to my heels and bolted on shore, instructing my boy

to come up for me when the pandemonium showed signs of abating.

I took up my position on the wall of an old fort a couple of hundred yards away, and the sounds which reached me there came with a certain amount of softness which made them, at least, bearable. At last we were ready ; the long-suffering chickens were duly installed in the cramped space which was to be theirs during the voyage, the women were busy preparing the midday meal for their husbands, and the children, exhausted with their recent labours, huddled up in the bow and went to sleep. But the distance from Omdurman to Khartoum is very short, and no sooner had we got fairly under way than we arrived at the capital. Here the noise started once more, though it was considerably modified now, because there was a sufficiency of poultry already on board, and the few native passengers who embarked here did so without bringing any live stock with them. As soon as we put into the shore one of the giant natives of the Sirdar's guard made his appearance to prepare the quarters which were to be occupied by Slatin Pasha ; and from that time there was a constant stream of baggage wending its way down from the palace, until at last the Pasha himself came on board and we were ready to start.

We got under way at about one o'clock ; the heat was tremendous, and I was thankful when the palms, which line the banks at Khartoum, began to slip past us as we glided down the stream, and we were fairly started. The literal meaning of the

word Khartoum is "elephant's trunk"; the curve which the land takes is similar to that of an elephant's trunk upraised. The trunk starts, as it were, at the Palace, and narrows to almost a point where the White Nile meets the Blue. At the meeting of the waters we turned to enter the White Nile; Khartoum, of course, faces the Blue. It is curious that the waters of the two rivers never seem to blend; the current of the latter river is, at the time of flood, much stronger than that of the former, and by its force in passing it holds up the water of the White Nile; the effect is that of dark, turbulent water rushing past a still lake of muddy white, and there is a distinct line when the waters actually meet. It is not until it gets some miles north of Omdurman that the water takes the colour which it bears on reaching Egypt—the colour of the White and Blue Niles blended.

Most of the gunboats are stern-wheelers, excepting three, which were originally designed for the gunboat service of the British Navy in the rivers of the far East, but which were handed over to the Sudan when it was decided that they would be necessary to the expedition. I went up on deck shortly after we had started, and looked down into the splashing waters in our wake. The day was mercilessly hot, the sun threw its rays, the full rays of the tropics, down on to the sweltering world below, the desert caught the sun and threw it back again into the air, which, laden and still, could do naught else than hold it. The top deck was too hot to walk on, unless



provided with thick shoes, but down below an eternal rainbow shone where the wheel made play with the cool depth of the waters, and I envied the blades of the paddle as they plunged eagerly into the river, rising slowly to the surface a moment later, dripping, glittering, and refreshed.

As the last house of Omdurman disappeared in our wake, a tiny cloud appeared in the west, and an hour later the whole sky had changed; not a breath of wind broke the stillness of the air, which yet seemed to quiver with apprehension of a coming storm. Eventually we made fast to the bank with anchors and mooring stakes, and we were not a moment too soon. Hardly had the last man clambered on board, after tying up, when the wind came sweeping, tearing across the desert from the west. I was rather surprised that it did not bring rain with it, as the clouds were black as ink, but it remained perfectly dry, and the wind itself did not last for more than about a quarter of an hour, when we were able to proceed again in a much brisker atmosphere, for the storm had the effect of stirring the air, which up till then hung like a blanket of oppression above our heads.

For the first hundred miles south of Omdurman the country is not particularly interesting; the banks are, for the most part, flat, and the place is far more attractive at the time of the flood, for then the low ground which lies between Omdurman and Dueim is one large lake. Navigation at this time of the year is extremely difficult, for each year the channel alters

slightly, and it is hard to avoid running ashore on some of the higher of the submerged lands ; at low Nile there is only one channel to follow, and consequently, unless the water is very low, there is less chance of being stranded. The gunboats and steamers are of extremely shallow draught, and built especially for this class of work, but even this does not prevent them getting badly stuck occasionally. With a falling Nile it is a serious matter to run ashore, as a sudden and sustained fall in the level of the water would leave the boat high and dry until the next flood, or otherwise entail the immense expense of digging a channel to float her out. During the time I was in the Sudan, I believe one boat had actually to be dug out, at a point near Geteina, between Khartoum and Dueim, and many others had exceedingly narrow escapes. The Nile between Omdurman and Dueim was particularly dangerous in this respect, as a sudden drop, however slight, in the Blue Nile, would release the body of water which was being held up on the White Nile, and this shallow expanse would be the first to drain itself off.

The only village of any importance between these two places is the village of Geteina, which I have just mentioned. It stands back some distance from the river on the right bank, and is, or rather was, chiefly remarkable for the cheapness of its market. Everything could be bought here at about a third of the price it cost in Omdurman. I remember the first time that I stopped at this spot I sent my boy ashore to buy some chickens ; he returned with fine

plump fowls at a piastre the pair. Twopence-halfpenny for a pair of prime young chickens !

From Geteina onwards it became a common thing to see a crocodile gliding into the river on the approach of the steamer, but the more remarkable sight is the extraordinary variety of bird life which is to be met with at about this point. At low Nile especially, the banks are lined with thousands and thousands of birds of all sorts and descriptions, from the smallest water-fowl to the stately marabout stalk. At a distance these latter look for all the world like old gentlemen in evening dress, walking along with their hands under their coat-tails, and I must confess that the first time I saw them I quite thought for a moment that they were human beings. They are very stately, and dignified beyond description. Although I shot several during the time that I was in the Sudan, I was invariably unfortunate as regards the quality of their feathers, and I never got a really good plume at all. Before I left the country the game laws had very rightly limited the shooting of these birds to one a year, for in the old days people frequently used to kill them whenever they got the chance, often during the moulting season, when there was no possibility of the feathers being in good condition.

Both duck and geese are very numerous about this stretch of the river, the former are often quite good eating, although the latter are almost invariably too tough to be worth the cooking. But of all the birds, I think that the sacred Ibis are the most beautiful, the



white of their feathers is so absolutely pure, and their movements attain the highest perfection of feathered grace. Hundreds and hundreds flock together, and rise in a cloud of snowy white as a boat draws close to them, although, apparently knowing that no one but the rankest outsider would shoot into their midst, or, indeed, at one of them, except for the purposes of collecting, they are perfectly tame, and they would allow anyone who was walking to get almost close enough to touch them.

It is the paradise of the feathered world, this reach of water which lies so close to Khartoum, and few boats stop there as a rule, so it is likely to remain more or less a sanctuary for a long time to come. The only danger which besets the birds lies at the hands of some of the parties which now throng the Sudan in the winter, for the purposes of so-called sport. I have seen them returning to Khartoum after their trip up the river, their boats laden with feathers and bird trophies, the majority of which would be cast into the river before they left the country. They shoot indiscriminately, and with the mere desire to kill; sport as sport does not enter into their calculations at all, and when an unfortunate fever of enterprise takes them up into the lands where larger game is to be found, they do more to thin the herds of antelope and gazelle than all the resident officials of the country put together. They shoot and possibly wound; then, never taking the trouble to stalk their original quarry, they blaze away at the next living thing that presents itself to their sight—provided that it is not dangerous.



Why cannot these people realise that the tenets of sport are the same in Africa as they are in the game coverts in England, and that indiscriminate volleys into herds of game is as intolerable there as it would be in a deer-park at home. Even the native officer has more idea of sport than some of our European guests, for at least the Egyptian shoots for food, and will let those birds which are not edible pass in peace.

Speaking of the native officers' sporting propensities reminds me of one man in the Sudan who had, among his fellow-officers, the reputation of living for sport, and for sport alone. I had heard of him long before I saw him, for his fame was great, and at length I came across him at Dueim. As soon as I appeared in the village I was greeted with the information that Somebody Effendi—I forget his name—had arrived from the interior, and that he would deem it an honour if I would accompany him on a shooting expedition that afternoon. I could not do less than accept his invitation, and punctually at four he called for me, his boys carrying his arms, a service rifle, and a really good Army and Navy Stores hammerless gun, a weapon which I ultimately bought, by the way. We walked for about a thousand yards, certainly not more, and then we came to a full stop behind a wall. On the other side of it there were two long chairs set in the shadow, a table, and a liberal supply of cigarettes and drinks of all descriptions. At his invitation I sat down, wondering what was to happen next, and when we were to start on our expedition. Eventually, after about half an hour, spent in ab-

sorbing coffee and sweet drinks which I did not want, I ventured to suggest that we had better be moving on, but my suggestion was greeted with the utmost surprise.

“Move on? Why, we are already there.” And then I learnt the cunning of Egyptian sport. After examining his weapons with the utmost care, he took the shot-gun under his arm, and, asking me to follow him, explained the situation. About twenty-five yards from our “battue” was a thin line of corn, laid carefully along the ground for several yards. He looked at his handiwork with evident pride.

“This,” he said, “is my own idea. I wait behind the wall until the pigeons come down to feed in the evening, and by patiently waiting until there are a large number, I can, with skill, kill as many as twenty-one with one shot.”

We went back to our weary vigil, but either the pigeons had become wary, or we did not wait long enough, for never a bird alighted on the fatal line that night. This was my first and last experience of sport as it is understood by the Egyptian. I never discovered why my companion was armed with a rifle in addition to his gun, but I suppose he thought it was as well to be prepared for resistance as he was contemplating such fearful slaughter.

The little town of Dueim, on the west bank of the Nile, is important, inasmuch as it is the junction for the interior of Kordofan and El Obeid. Kordofan is rich in gum, and every ounce of it is transported by camel to Dueim, whence it is embarked on boats

for Omdurman. During the gum season the place presents an extraordinary scene of animation. There are literally hundreds of boats, of all sizes and descriptions, lined up against the banks, waiting for their cargo ; and on shore the place is thronged with an ever-changing crowd of camels and caravan attendants, who have come in laden with the produce of the interior, and are resting a day or so before essaying the return journey of five days across the desert. It is not generally known that the gum in its untreated state is esculent, but such is the case ; and in some parts of the Sudan, in the Blue Nile provinces especially, it is quite a common thing for the natives to carry a supply with them ; they are as fond of it as the Americans are reputed to be of their chewing gum. The gum season is always a very anxious period for the merchants, as should the cargo get wet it is spoilt and comparatively useless ; and, unfortunately, it arrives at the Nile just as the rains are beginning, so that the utmost care has to be taken of it even while on shore. Another drawback is to be found in the fact that only half-loads can be put on board the gyassas, which are commonly used to transport it to Omdurman, as a laden boat would naturally be more liable to ship water in the case of a sudden wind, when the whole value of the cargo would probably be lost.

There is a small sukh at Dueim for the manufacture of silver goods, such as bangles and ankle rings for the women ; but the work is neither as fine or as varied as that in Omdurman. In the early days of

the Administration there was nearly always a British officer stationed at this town, and others were constantly passing to and fro from Kordofan, but it was not the seat of a Mudir, a Mamour or magistrate—an Egyptian—being the representative of the Government, subject, of course, to the orders of the British officer when one was on the station. It is a capital place for grouse shooting; they come swooping down to the river in the early morning, and I got seventeen couples one morning in about half an hour, all single shots, of course; and I must have missed quite half as many as I hit.

One sees the first signs of wooded land in the neighbourhood of Dueim. The first wooding station for the boats was situated some four miles to the north of the town; the steamers relied entirely upon wood as fuel, and, consequently, the forests showed rather thin and bare even in those days. This was due to the indiscriminate hacking down and lopping of trees, and the result was that many of the trees were killed outright, whereas had a proper system been instituted from the beginning, the growth would have been quite fast enough to keep up with the demand for fuel. A little to the south the forest fringes the river even when it is low, and at high Nile the trees stand out in the water, heavily clothed with green of every shade, and make a picture of wonderful charm. The reach between Dueim and Goz Abu Goma was always my favourite bit of the Nile, that is to say, in as far as the picturesqueness of the scene was concerned, though it was neither so African, nor so



grand, as many of the stretches which lie further to the south. There was always plenty of duck about this part of the river, and at the wood stations there was a fair variety of game, sand grouse, the long-legged French partridge, and also a few guinea-fowl.

Crocodiles are very numerous, and one occasionally saw an hippopotamus, though these animals visit the northern waters in smaller numbers every year. Almost the first time that I stopped at one of the wood stations in this district, one of the sailors caught a baby crocodile by the tail as he was sleeping on the bank of the river. I kept him in a tank on board for some weeks, but he never showed any disposition to make friends with me, though I used to feed him regularly myself. Eventually he died, and was duly stuffed.

There are a great number of small monkeys in the forests here, too, and it always amused me to watch them going down to drink towards nightfall; they proceeded with such infinite care, and if the head of a crocodile appeared above the water within fifty yards of where they were drinking, the beach was cleared in no time. Poor little beggars, they pay their heavy tribute to the slimy inhabitants of the river year by year I suppose, so it is no wonder that they are afraid. They become tame very quickly, and are nice, clean little companions as a rule. I kept one once, but I was not fortunate in my choice, and I never tried another. He certainly was the most destructive little animal that I have ever seen, and his career with me terminated on the day that he took

it into his head to visit a friend of mine in his house at Khartoum. Finding the host asleep he proceeded to tear his mosquito curtain to rags, and having accomplished this to his satisfaction he turned his attention to the drawing-room. One thing struck his fancy, a photograph in a large oak and silver frame. It was, unfortunately, the only photograph which my friend, a newly-engaged man, possessed of his fiancée. It was also unfortunate that at the moment when Jock, with the photo held out at arm's length, was admiring its beauty, that its owner, with a Sudan liver and clothed in his pyjamas, should have appeared at the door. Left to himself the monkey might have replaced the photograph, but terrified, as I can well imagine, by the vision in the doorway, he bolted through the window and on to the roof. There he broke the glass in the frame. That was intensely interesting, so he threw the frame down, to see if anything more would break. It did. Capital! Then he made the pleasing discovery that the photo itself would tear. He was caught at last, and I gave him away to my boy with instructions that I was never to see him again. He was, I afterwards heard, sold in the Sukh to a native woman for a piastre, and he was pretty certain of a good home, for the natives love monkeys.

But to return to the forests at Dueim. A large proportion of the wood in this neighbourhood is sunt, and makes capital fuel; it is almost as good as coal, and is very much more economical than the commoner woods which grow at most of the other stations. A

few miles further up the river, on the opposite bank, there is a pretty little village, called Kawa. It is very small, but has quite a good market, and there was an Egyptian police officer always in residence there. This village is quite remarkable for the beauty of its women; they are, of course, coloured, and range from light chocolate to jet black, but many of them are exceedingly good-looking. At the time of the Anglo-Egyptian expedition to the Sudan, as many of the best-looking members of the Khalifa's harem as he could spare were sent south, to be out of harm's way in the event of possible disaster in the coming encounter with the British. As the inhabitants of his harem were legion, they were too many to return to Omdurman when things became more settled, after the arrival of the English. It was these women and their progeny whom one saw about these villages, which are not very far from the scene of their former master's final defeat and death.

I do not know why it should have been so, but Kawa was always a great place for form and ceremony. The first time that I went ashore I was preceded by an ancient sheik, who announced my coming in stentorian tones, and made the people rise long before I had come near to them. There is a medium in all things, and this was a little too much of a good thing. I saw very little that day. I felt as I should imagine Royalty must feel after a state visit somewhere, when they have had the day filled with a perpetual applause which they have felt bound to reply to.

Kawa is famous also as being the most northern point to which the sudd ever arrives ; it cannot, for some reason, get past this station. Further south huge blocks of it are to be met with frequently, but the great bulk sinks before it has got a few hundred miles down the Nile, and I do not think it has ever been seen further north than Kawa. It is curious why it should be so, and I know of no reason for it, except that in a given number of days the stuff is bound to have absorbed sufficient water to sink it ; or it may be, though I do not think that this is the case, that there is an under-current at this point, which draws it under, and from which it lacks sufficient buoyancy to extract itself. At low Nile it is impossible to get near the place in a steamer, even of such shallow draft as those in general use on the river ; the same thing applies to the next place of any importance, Goz Abu Goma.

The nearest landing stage to Goz Abu Goma is nearly half an hour's walk from the station, at the time when the Nile is at its lowest, for it is built on the main shore side of a khor, the inner channel of which dries up almost entirely in the case of a very low river. At high Nile the island round which the khor runs almost disappears from sight, but when the river is low it is necessary for the boats to stop at the other side of it, and the only way to get to the town is to walk the breadth of the island, and cross the dried khor. This town marked the end of civilisation at the time when I arrived in the Sudan. It was the last place at which stores or meat could be



procured for money ; it was the last place where luxuries in the way of sugar, etc., could be procured at all, until one got up to the other civilisation of the Congo or Uganda, to the south of the Sudan. It was then at the end of the telegraph line, and weekly boats from Omdurman went no further south with the mails ; it was, so to speak, the frontier station of the newly-civilised Sudan. Not that the place itself had any claim to being called civilised ; it was merely a collection of mud houses, and had no commerce or trade to recommend it except that it was, at that time, the cheapest place to buy ostrich feathers in the country, and there were some small Greek stores in the market, where, as I have said, it was possible to buy a few of the more ordinary articles of food-stuffs.

It was the end of the desert, the beginning of the tropical Sudan. Sand, which had been growing more scarce each hour after leaving Dueim, now disappeared entirely, and waving stretches of green lined the banks on either side of the river. In some places, and on alternating sides of the water, these swards of green extended nearly half a mile before meeting the forest. They were simply swamp, and it was wellnigh impossible to land there, but that did not detract from their refreshing appearance, especially to eyes grown painfully accustomed to the glare of the sun striking upon sand alone.

Sixteen miles south of Goz Abu Goma is the Ford of Abu Zeit, the one spot where, at the time of an exceptionally low Nile, the river is unnavigable

except for the smallest boats. It was so when I arrived in the Sudan, it is so to-day. Why it should be left in this state, an endless source of trouble and expense, it is impossible for me to say. The Government, so go-ahead and far-seeing in most things, seem to have shirked the difficulties of this one question in a most inexcusable manner. They have sent men, competent, practical men, up to survey it; they have spent weeks in pegging out the deepest channel with pegs that were swept away by the first rush of water which came with a rising Nile; they have accumulated reports on the subject which must run into volumes; and they have done—nothing. The first thing that I heard in reference to this ford was that a channel of sufficient breadth to allow of the passage of at least one steamer at the lowest Nile was to be blasted out; the last thing I heard about it was that the job offered difficulties too great to be overcome. And this from men who have tamed the Sudan to bear with and foster one of the highest civilisations of the world, and who have cut a way for their steamers through a hundred miles of swamp.

I suppose that as a matter of fact the Government does not consider that the outlay would be justified by the result, for it would undoubtedly be an expensive job. The bed of the ford is almost entirely composed of thick layers of the shells of an oyster-like fish, which is certainly one of the hardest substances to be dealt with; gun-cotton has not the slightest effect upon it, at least not when

applied in the ordinary way, and there is hard work before the man who undertakes to clear a channel here. On the other hand, there are weeks, one might almost say months, lost in this ford year after year, by the heavily-laden boats proceeding from Omdurman to the south. They run ashore and stick fast. The only way in which they can be brought off is by removing a portion of the cargo. If there are a number of small boats to receive the displaced cargo so much the better, if not, there is the tedious performance to go through of unloading the goods from the steamer, putting them on to a smaller boat, which takes them up to the deeper water beyond the ford and places it on shore, afterwards returning for more, and so on until the steamer is sufficiently light to proceed. Then the stores have again to be carried from the shore to the steamer before she is ready to start on her journey again.

And all this labour is for a couple of hundred yards—it is scarcely more—of shallow water. Imagine the state of the Government should a rising suddenly take place south of this ford at the time of a very low Nile; the fleet would be snug in Khartoum—useless—or at least practically so. In a country like the Sudan one never knows from one moment to another exactly what is going to happen; a Mahdi springs up in an unexpected quarter, and the only possibility of saving the situation without great expense and probable loss of blood, lies in the ability to deal with the trouble at once, before the revolutionary has time to work upon the susceptibilities

of the natives by whom he is surrounded. Surely, therefore, the action of the Government in postponing from year to year any definite scheme for removing the one barrier which exists at the present day to prevent navigation between Khartoum and Gondokoro, is badly advised, and short-sighted in the extreme. Had strenuous measures been taken at the beginning, and money devoted to the deepening of this portion of the river, it would already have paid for itself in the time that it would have saved. For not only does it delay the boat which is actually stranded, it delays the whole system of transport in the south. Boats coming down from the Bahr-el Ghazal, or other places, to meet and transfer stores from the expected steamer, are forced to wait while these are being transhipped and retranshipped on the Ford of Abu Zeit; everything is disorganised. In my opinion this should be one of the very first works to be undertaken by the Government, even if a special credit has to be opened to accomplish it.

As soon as the ford is passed the mountains of Gebelain appear in sight. The name Gebel Ain is literally the "two mountains"; they are supposed to have been at one time volcanic, though I believe that this is uncertain. They stand on the right bank of the Nile, two hundred and twenty odd miles south of Khartoum, and can be seen at intervals for miles from the north and south. The place used at one time to be a fairly good shooting centre I am told; but I never saw anything there myself except an occasional gazelle, or the more common kind of



antelope. The mountains, though shrubby at the base, are quite devoid of vegetation further up, and stand, great bare landmarks of dark brown red, the only mountains as far as the eye can reach.

Renk is the next station ; it is also on the right bank of the river, and I do not know why it exists at all, for it is one of the most desolate and mosquito-ridden swamps north of Fashoda. The gunboats, in proceeding to Fashoda after the battle of Omdurman, had a slight engagement here with one of the scattered bands of dervishes which were roaming about the country, but the place was taken without much opposition, and the only thing to wonder at is why they ever fought for it at all !

It was from here that a telegraph clerk sent his now famous message. The story is old enough, and has appeared in some of the Egyptian newspapers, I believe, but it is worth repeating. It was in the days when the line was being extended slowly to the south, and the telegraph head was left in charge of an Egyptian operator while the Englishman employed went further ahead to survey the best route to follow. The line had reached Renk, and, according to custom, the Egyptian clerk was left in charge to take messages from Khartoum.

One morning the Director-General of the Telegraph Administration, who was then at Khartoum, received an "urgent" telegram from the sportsman in charge at Renk. "Surrounded by wild natives, elephants, bears, and tigers ; please relieve."

Needless to say, no notice was taken of this appeal,

and that night, when the Director-General was comfortably asleep in his long chair after dinner, he was awakened by an orderly with another telegram, "Refer my No. . . . Cancel bears." The unfortunate man had evidently been talking things over with some of the "wild natives," and had been informed that bears were non-existent in Africa !

The place has certainly been greatly improved in later days, but it was desolation itself at the time of my first voyage up the Nile. A little further inland, however, there was a good deal of shooting to be got, and buffalo are sometimes to be found within a few miles of the station. I met a shooting party there some time before I left the Sudan. One of the members had that morning been out for three hours, and had not had a shot. On his way home he stood to watch a boy driving some goats from the river to graze ; suddenly a lioness sprang from some bushes not fifty yards from where he was standing, and seized one of the goats. He was a capital shot, and landed her with a ball through the heart. She proved to be an exceptionally fine beast, and it was more than lucky, for lions, though fairly numerous, are very hard to get at, and for one to come out into the open, when the boy was driving the animals noisily up from the river, was an almost unprecedented occurrence. Personally, I never got anything but a stray gazelle or two and a few water-buck here, but I never went very far afield at this point.

If desolation reigned supreme at Renk, what must be said of Fashoda, the swampy abode of fever that

all but set two of the most powerful nations of Europe at one another's throats? I had been longing to see it, and I can say without hesitation that it was the most disappointing place in the Sudan. To begin with, there was nothing there, that is to say, nothing but swamp, and dampness and fever, and a few mud huts. At that time it was not even a military station of the Government; there were a few military police under the command of a melancholy-looking Maaowen, but there was nothing in the atmosphere or appearance of the place to hint that it had been one of the most important spots in recent history. The famous fort which Major Marchand had occupied during his stay there was still standing, and thither I went at the first opportunity, in the vain hope of seeing something which would convey the actuality of the past to my bewildered mind. I found it unoccupied except by a few swifts which had built their nests under the mouldering eaves of the roof.

And yet it was here that Marchand had stood at the head of his handful of troops, and defied the largely superior forces of Britain and Egypt. It was here, that under the shadow of the Tricolour, he had watched the arrival of the gunboats, until quite a formidable fleet had assembled in the creek commanding his residence. It was here that he had seen his dreams fade one by one. It was, in short, here that a brave man had stood steadfastly at his post, ready to face certain death and defeat should the honour of his country demand it of him. It is said that he wept when he found that it was not to be; that he

was to go in peace, but with the knowledge that the Sudan had passed from the hands of the French Empire for ever. He had done his work nobly and well, and it may well be that at the time, he would have preferred to be called upon to make the sacrifice of his life and following, rather than leave the post he had struggled so hard to gain. Since those days the name of the place has been changed from Fashoda to Kodok, the native name. The reason assigned at the time of the change was that it was done in honour of France. If this is the case, which I am still much inclined to doubt, I think that it is one of the greatest insults which one nation could offer another; the French are not a nation of children; it has not been thought necessary to change the name of Trafalgar Square or of Waterloo Place; the thing is inconsistent in every way.

Fashoda has nothing to recommend it to anyone, except for a few months in the flood, when there is good duck-shooting in the neighbouring creeks. To the back of the village there is a fairly level stretch of ground running away to the forest beyond, but it is swampy for a great part of the year, and uninteresting always. There is no shooting to be got in the district, with the exception of the duck which I have just mentioned, and altogether, it is, or rather was, one of the most uninteresting places that one could meet with, though I think that perhaps Renk beat it for absolute desolation.

In later days it became the seat of the Mudir, or Governor of the Upper Nile province, and much has



been done to make the place more healthy and livable. Lieut.-Colonel Matthews of the Royal Marines, to whom the task of reclaiming this province has been to the greatest extent entrusted, has worked indefatigably ever since he arrived in the district, with the result that he has succeeded in reducing the yearly number of fever cases to an extraordinary extent, and that far from being the fever-ridden swamp of former days, it is now a comparatively healthy station.

The tribe which inhabits the immediate vicinity of the place are Shilluks, a fine upstanding race, but hopelessly imbued with the idea that it is a degradation for a man to work at anything except the pursuit of game, if such a delightful exercise can be called labour. The boys are ready and willing to work, and they are by no means lazy, but once they arrive at the age of puberty they return to their villages, and pass the rest of their lives in hunting and idling. It is almost impossible for anyone who has not had to combat the deadly effects of this conservatism, to realise how deep-rooted and inseparable it is from the native.

A few miles to the south of Fashoda the first missionary station has been formed, under the supervision of an Austrian order of Catholics. I asked a priest one day as to the chances of gathering converts to Christianity from among the natives of the district, who are at present heathens pure and simple. His reply spoke volumes as to the difficulty to be overcome. "If we continue our work as we are doing at present," he replied, "we may, in another hundred



Photo by G. B. Middleton

YOUNG SUDANESE—WHITE Nile



years, begin to think of teaching religion. At present we devote ourselves entirely to the training of the younger natives to agricultural labour, and they take to it readily enough. But their parents——” he shrugged his shoulders impressively. “Only the other day we were gathering our crop of tomatoes, which has been unusually plentiful this season. The event had attracted a large number of the adult, as well as of the more youthful population, from the neighbouring villages. They tasted the fruit and were delighted with it, and fought greedily for a sackful which we gave to be distributed among those who were present. Later, when the period for planting arrived, we sent a sack of seeds to the head of the village, thinking that they would be delighted at the chance of growing the fruit for themselves. No such thing ; the sack was returned without thanks. Their grandfathers had not planted tomatoes, their fathers had not done so, then why should they ? ”

It is disheartening work, this trying to instil enterprise into the savage mind. They consider labour of any kind derogatory when once they have reached the age of manhood, and they would rather starve than work. It is the case in this district ; it is even more pronounced further south.

I recollect once, towards the end of my time in the Sudan, there had been a famine raging in the district which lies on the borders of the Belgian Congo. I was on a boat which was taking grain to the Government stores at Mongalla, the last station to the south of the Sudan. There was also a



cargo of cattle in tow, and it was consequently necessary to stop once a day to cut grass for their feed. The rainy season had set in, and the banks of the river were lined with rich, verdant grass, almost as high as one's head. At one of the places where we stopped there was a village a few hundred yards back from the river, and the inhabitants came out in force to watch the proceedings. There must have been quite fifty or sixty men at least, seated on the bank, and a wretched sight they were, thin to emaciation, and with the dull eyes that tell the tale of constant hunger. At last the chief arrived, and begged for grain. He was told that if his men cut the grass for fodder he would be supplied with it. He looked doubtful, but went ashore to confer with his tribe. One by one they rose from their seats, and slunk away to their miserable huts, hungry and weak. They would not cut the grass, though it would hardly have necessitated their rising from their seats to do it. They preferred the hunger which was gnawing at their vitals rather than the slight expenditure of labour the act would have entailed. They can, of course, be driven to work, and they work wonderfully well too, for men who have been hitherto absolute strangers to it; but the driving days are over now, and if any good is to be done, it must be by constant urging of the advantages which are to be gained by labour.

Colonel Matthews has already worked wonders in the Fashoda district in this manner. Those who work at the various jobs which the Government has

to offer are paid in the coin of the realm, and they can share the delights of the moneyed men ; in consequence, those who will not work must be content to sit on the bank and watch, and though it may be a pleasant occupation enough while your neighbour is hard at it, it is entirely the reverse when he dons the brilliant clothing purchased with the money he has earned, and returns, the idol of the ladies, to his native village.

The women here, as in all parts of the Sudan, play an important part in the daily lives of the inhabitants ; they take an active and prominent part in all social functions, and are never excluded from intercourse with men other than their husbands, as are the women of Egypt. They are not handsome, but they are faithful, at least, they were until the contaminating influences of a standard of morality infinitely lower than their own followed in the wake of civilisation. But they still retain to a great extent their old ideas of right and wrong, except in some of the villages which border the larger towns, where troops and their harems are situated.

I have already alluded to the harm done by some of the Greek traders by the importation of cheap, rank spirits into the country, and it is at Fashoda, and in the Fashoda district, that the effects are most noticeable. The former Mek, or King, of the district was addicted to strong drink, and it seems that his example was freely followed by his subjects. I saw him once, when on my first trip he came on board to pay his respects to

Slatin Pasha, and his appearance was most impressive. He wore a long cloak of black cloth, which exactly matched his complexion, his forearms were hidden by innumerable bracelets of polished brass, and his feet were encased in the red leather shoes of the country. A head-dress of white linen, used as a turban, and a huge naval sword completed his outfit. He was a cheery old soul, and his followers paid him the greatest deference.

I was not on board to witness his arrival, but his departure was attended with the greatest state. When he had got safely off the ship—incidentally he nearly fell into the water, as a result of the engines being worked by mistake, an accident for which I was responsible, and which I tried to regret—he mounted a donkey, salaamed to the Pasha, and went off at a sharp jog-trot. His chief attendant ran at his side, and vainly attempted to keep an enormous umbrella over the august head. The rest of his court ran behind in a straggling train, carrying spears, and wearing nothing but mud head-dresses.

It is said that a chaplain went south from Khar-toum in the early days, and that on his arrival at Fashoda he stepped ashore, full of zeal to see what could be done in the way of missionary work in the short time at his disposal. Further north, where the religion of Islam holds the people, the Government is very strict in the prohibition of proselytising in any way, but at Fashoda, where the natives are simple heathens, missionaries may act as they please. The King was introduced to our friend as one of the most

promising subjects by the British officer in command of the station, but, unfortunately, the same boat which had carried the clergyman south must have also carried illicit spirits as part of its cargo, for, to say the least, the King was happy! It may be that his extraordinary spirits were put down by the clergyman to the natural temperament of a people whom he had never encountered before; it may be that he was blinded by his enthusiasm; in any case, he was by no means daunted. After greetings had been exchanged, he put a question to his Majesty, through his interpreter. "What is the religion of your country?"

The King looked somewhat taken aback for the moment; then he laughed good-humouredly. "Tell the *khawaga* (gentleman)," he said, "that our religion is the same as that of the English; we have none, and we drink whisky."

The reply was false as the old rascal himself; the tribe is by no means without a religion; they worship the spirit of a departed King, who is reputed to have lived some four hundred years ago, and whose spirit dwells in the winds which sweep the country in the summer months. It always strikes me that there is something most attractive about this worship; it seems as though there may well be the spirit of a watchful deity in the winds that fling their courses over the land at times, and which claim obeisance from the trees and stately grasses, as well as from the waters of the Nile itself. Africa is grand in its wild, lone places at ordinary times, but most of all



is its grandeur compelling and real when the storm spirit wakes in its fury, and shakes in its passing the foundations of the earth.

Far more noble does this religion of the Shilluk seem to me than that of the Dinkas on the opposite bank of the river, who worship their forefathers. The religion of neither of these tribes is particularly binding; they are, indeed, little more than a tradition, except in occasions of stress, and then it is the case of "when the Devil is sick," etc., over again. The men in these districts are very tall, but they are so thin that they seem to have no flesh on their bodies at all; they are, however, strong and wiry, and only need regular food and proper training to develop into a magnificent race. Their language is not remarkable for the number of words employed; conversation is chiefly carried on with a "klk" in variations; they are not a loquacious race, and will sit in crowds for hours, never opening their lips, or, to judge from their expressions, thinking very deeply either.

"Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise," and I suppose these people get their maximum enjoyment out of life, but it is hard for a Westerner to understand where the enjoyment comes in, except when they are on their sporting tours. This is perhaps all-sufficing for the men, but what of the women, hanging about the precincts of the tiny huts they inhabit, day in and day out? Certainly they have no rates and taxes to bother them; no pressing questions of new hats or dresses to cause them a

moment's anxiety; and it may be that they are content with their life, having known no better.

A little to the south of Fashoda is situated the mission station to which I have already alluded. Why this particular spot was chosen I was never able to discover, for it is on the borders of a pestilent swamp, and mosquitoes and flies of every description infest it in millions. But here it is, and here, presumably, it will remain, for it has been established some years now, and the Fathers would be loath to leave it, swamp and fever-ridden though it be. I never met a priest in the Sudan who did not prefer to be isolated in this spot than stationed in the comparative luxury of Omdurman or Khartoum. They work hard, and, what is more, they devote their energies in the right direction. For the present, as I have said, they give their time to the training of the people to agricultural and other pursuits, and leave the actual teaching of religion to a future generation; in this manner they are assisting the Government in the task of civilising the country, and at the same time preparing the people for Christianity in the best possible manner.

Before I leave the subject of Fashoda I will mention a fact which I believe few people are aware of, certainly very few were aware of it at the time it occurred. It will be remembered that the feeling between France and England ran rather high over the Fashoda incident, and thousands of loyal Frenchmen assembled at the Gare de Lyons to meet Major Marchand, who was the idol of the moment, on his

return to Paris. He was conducted from the station in great style, and his carriage passed through the lines of a cheering multitude. Two Britishers who had arrived by the same train from the south entered a hired carriage and drove away unnoticed into the town. What would the waiting crowds have had to say had they known that these two men were General Kitchener and his A.D.C., Major, now Colonel, Watson? The event of their arrival by the same train had been quite unintentional, but it must be admitted that it would have looked suspiciously like a personal affront to the French nation had the occurrence been known at the time.

Between the towns of Fashoda and Taufikier the land is flat and entirely uninteresting; there is nothing to see except the native villages which border the river here and there, and the only thing bigger than a bird that I ever saw on this reach worth shooting was a huge snake. One of the crew spotted it from the bridge, so we drew into the bank a few hundred yards off, and I landed to try and get a shot at him. The men on the boat waved me on to where about it had been seen, and I advanced with extreme caution. I do not like snakes. Eventually I got a glimpse of his shining back, and kneeling to take better aim, I fired. I could not be certain whether I had hit or not; there was no movement, so I fired again. Still no movement; I must have killed him stone dead the first shot! I advanced, stealthily still; one never quite knows what a snake will do; but at length my nostrils, sharper than my eyes, told me

the reason of its lack of movement. I returned to the boat without advancing further—it was not necessary.

The approach to Taufikier itself is very pretty ; the banks are lined with doleb palms, and, even on the hottest day, there is always an effect of coolness in the great fat shadows which lie beneath them. It is a nice clean little town, and at the time of my arrival it was the head-quarters of the Governor of the Upper Nile Province. It is the last station which lies to the north of the desolate regions of sudd, which have cost the Government such thousands of pounds to clear. Taufikier was then only of importance as the junction for the Bahr-el-Ghazal, the Bahr-el-Gebel, the Sobat, and the Bahr-el-Zaraf.



## CHAPTER IV

### A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

UPON our arrival at Taufikier, Slatin Pasha definitely decided to proceed up the river Sobat to try and find traces of two Englishmen who had left Khartoum some time before for these regions, and had never been heard of since passing Taufikier. Comparatively few boats had at that time been up the river, and I was very glad to get the opportunity of making the journey ; indeed, it was very lucky that I did so, for in all the time that I was in the Sudan I never got far from its mouth again.

I had some difficulty in procuring fresh meat to start with, as, much to my dismay, I found that in spite of a good supply of gold and silver of the realm, I might just as well have been without money at all, for the inhabitants of Taufikier would have none of it. A foot of brass wire would have procured me food sufficient to last me for a month, but money was useless. Eventually my boy managed to buy some brass from a Greek, at an exorbitant rate, and I got a few chickens to start the journey with ; these proved to be more than ample, as there was any amount of game to be got whenever we stopped, guinea-fowl and pigeon principally, but enough to keep the table plentifully supplied.



# NATIVES AT TADFIKIER

Their head-dresses are made of their own hair woven to shape



My recollections of the Sobat are, unfortunately, somewhat vague; everything was new and impressive, and I have got events and places rather mixed up in my mind; the sheets of my diary which were written during that first trip have, unfortunately, been lost. I recollect, however, that two of the things which impressed me most at the time was the extraordinary greenness of the vegetation, and the wonderful clouds of fireflies which lined the banks of the river at night. There were millions of them—and the effect was very beautiful as they moved, a constant scintillating wave of glittering light about the banks. They are supposed to devour the mosquitoes, and these latter had, I sincerely trust, as bad a time as they gave me. At least there is no danger of my forgetting the mosquitoes of the River Sobat. I had never seen anything like them before, and indeed, there were only two spots in the Sudan that I came across which were as bad as this. They started with the setting of the sun, and continued their attentions without a break until dawn; then they departed, happy in the knowledge that it would be too hot for one to sleep. I had the mosquito curtain put up under my own supervision; I examined every inch of it to see that there was no hole by which a mosquito could enter; I had two boys to flick them away with towels as I slunk into bed, and just when I was falling asleep they would begin to find their way in, in twos and threes, humming with delight as they settled on the end of my nose, or on the tip of my ears. It was no good; I simply had to sleep,



and at length I trained myself to do so, native-like, with my head under a sheet; this was the only manner in which rest was possible.

The country was most interesting, and the tribes which one saw were absolutely different to those on the other rivers; some of them had almost intellectual faces; all of them were splendid specimens of humanity. They were, however, very shy, and it was with the greatest difficulty that they could be persuaded to approach the boat. At several villages we stopped, and seeing no sign of life, sent men up to see what had become of the inhabitants. They found fires lit and water boiling, all the details of daily life in full swing, but never a human being in the whole village. If we waited long enough, they would, perhaps, gain sufficient courage to venture forth from behind the ant-hills where they had been hiding, and would eventually approach the boat; but they were in evident terror, and it is small wonder that they should have been, since the only white men they had known before were those who had come at the head of armed forces to carry away their women and children to be slaves in the distant north.

They were for the most part great dandies; the men had wonderful coiffures of mud and feathers, some of them must have been of a tremendous weight, and I don't know yet how they ever managed to sleep. It is related that an Englishman, boasting to a Scotchman of the cleverness of some of the phrases in the English language, quoted the one, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." "It's all right," said

the Scotchman, "for fools; a Scotchman would never dream of attempting it!" But these people keep their head-dresses on night and day, for the simple reason that they are plastered into, and mixed with, the hair, and they are impossible to remove—at any rate, they would need months of soaking first. The richer of the people, who own herds of cattle, wear horns of wood fashioned to resemble those of their finest bull, and the majority of the men also wear heavy armlets of ivory above the elbow. No clothing at all is worn by the men or by the single women; they occasionally wear girdles of beads made from the shells of ostrich eggs, but that is as far as they go in the way of dress. They are by far and away the most moral tribe in the Sudan; indeed, infidelity, or a moral lapse before marriage is practically unknown; should such a thing occur, death is immediately meted out to both parties.

Before leaving Omdurman I had purchased a few cheap mirrors, as I had been told that they were useful in some districts for exchanging for curiosities, and they proved to be so here. I shall never forget the delight of one young girl of about, perhaps, sixteen years, when she first beheld her grinning face in the mirror. She simply yelled with delight, and bolted with the glass as soon as her friends flocked round to see what was pleasing her so much.

Slatin Pasha had taken a large quantity of scarlet cloth up with him to present to the natives—they love colour—and the first present was made to a stalwart chief who came down to the river when

the boat stopped on one of the banks of the Sobat. His delight was evident, but it never seemed to occur to him at all that it could be converted into a robe to clothe his nakedness. He left the boat with the length of cloth wound carefully around his neck, and save for that and a couple of ivory armlets, he was innocent of clothing. The crew of the steamer were highly delighted, especially when the Pasha's secretary attempted to explain how it should be worn. Eventually he was persuaded to use it as a robe, but he evidently thought that it was a waste of good material.

We went up one of the tributaries of the Sobat, towards Abyssinia, and when we neared its borders the river grew more narrow and difficult to navigate every hour; we at length decided to tie up for the night, and turn on our homeward journey the following morning. That evening, however, we collected some of the inhabitants, who were particularly shy in this part; and it was well we did so, for they were full of an account of a white man with an armed following, who was said to be some twenty miles further up the river.

Early next morning we pushed ahead again, though it was very difficult to make a passage through the weeds and undergrowth of the surrounding forests which stretched far across the water. It was the first time that a steamer had ever been up so far, and a dozen times we were on the point of giving up in despair. At last we got into a short stretch of comparatively open water, but the next moment we

saw that there was no river visible at all beyond, the channel being completely obstructed by vegetation, and we decided to turn back. We went a few yards ahead to turn, and crashed into the trees at the side. Immediately afterwards, dozens of heads appeared at the top of the bank, and among them stood the typical Robinson Crusoe of our childhood, except that the stranded traveller, in this case, wore a monocle. Otherwise, he was perfect, the same that we have all loved as children, even to the skins which clothed his body. We had failed to find the men whom we had been seeking in the first place, but we had stumbled at the last moment on a white man sorely in need of assistance. He was a German professor, who had come to Africa on a tour of exploration. He had missed his way in the first place, and then sickness set in among his porters, with the result that his progress had been very slow. The party had been without food for three days when we came across them, except for such meat which they were able to shoot, and this, though satisfying, is dangerous when one has no vegetables, or even jam or bread, to eat at the same time. Jam is, by the way, an excellent substitute for vegetables, and will often ward off the sicknesses which arise from want of the latter food.

The whole party came on board, with what baggage they possessed, and in less than an hour after the encounter we were under way again, heading towards the north. The boat was pretty well crowded out with men and stores, but the new arrivals were all



in such excellent spirits that it was nice to have them, even though it caused a good deal of discomfort on board, since every gangway was filled with packing-cases, saddles, etc. The carriers, of course, confined themselves strictly to the lower deck. They were absolutely different to the Sudanese, or to any race that I have seen before, and presented a very marked contrast to the lanky, thin tribes which lined the banks of the country through which we were passing. They were rather short, and very sturdy, and resembled the inhabitants of the Belgian Congo, whom I saw at a later date. The spot where we came across them was actually in Abyssinian territory, though I think that at the time the owners paid very little heed to that part of their dominions. It is all quite different now, when increased facilities of transport to the Sudan have made every inch of land in the district of possible agricultural value.

The rains were getting pretty bad as we descended the river, and it only required one sharp shower to prove that the boat leaked in every seam. I shall never forget the nights I spent on the old *Amkeh* now entirely renovated, and quite a smart boat. She was then the veriest wreck on the Nile, at least I should imagine so, as by all the laws of comparison it would be impossible for there to be a worse. At first I used to resent the trickling of water down the nape of my neck, and as the only really dry spot on board, which was under the dining-room table, was already occupied by the Pasha in virtue of his rank, I used to spend my nights roaming about from cabin to

cabin, followed by an approving chorus of mosquitoes, who, like myself, objected to the rain. Eventually, I settled on the bathroom as being the next best place to the one already alluded to; it was then comparatively dry, and the bath, though somewhat cramped, was more comfortable than one would imagine.

Long before I had spent a month in the rains, however, I had come to the happy state of being able to sleep with equal comfort in the wet or in the dry, which was an undoubted advantage at the time, but which laid the seeds of that rheumatism which is now making itself felt between my shoulders as I write. The mornings were unhealthy but absolutely lovely; the river would be covered with a thick white mist, so thick that it was impossible to see for more than a dozen yards ahead of the boat; then as the power of the sun began to make itself felt, the mist would gradually dissolve, leaving the world green, and fresh, and clean. Occasionally, one would see a water-buck dash away not a hundred yards from the river, and the water itself swarmed with hippopotami; monstrous heads would appear suddenly close to the bow, to disappear with a snort of disgust as they realised the unwonted size of the approaching craft. Huge hideous faces of animals which have been left over from prehistoric days by mistake; they have no place in the twentieth century, when even in our animals we are refined and genteel!

Some of the younger and more sporting members of

the clan, resenting the invasion of their own particular stretch of water, would follow in the wake of the boat, puffing and snorting, but though they made a great display of bravery, they were always careful to avoid coming into contact with the wheel of the steamer. In the Bahr-el-Ghazal these animals overturned a felucca containing mails, twice in a month, and it was found necessary to issue permission to shoot at them from the steamers or boats. In this manner, of course, great numbers have either been killed outright, or have subsequently died of their wounds, but the rivers to the south are still well stocked, and as long as they are not allowed to constitute an actual danger to life or property, it is to be hoped that they will be preserved. They are not like the crocodile, which is a constant danger to anything that comes within its reach. I have only heard of one hippopotamus which attacked a man, and that was an instance recorded in one of Sir Samuel Baker's books.

The Sobat river has a large number of water-snakes, whose gliding forms are of brilliant scarlet and green, they are not poisonous, but their less noticeable brother, the small black water-snake, should be given a very wide berth ; he is as quick as lightning and quite as dangerous. I recollect once having a startling experience with one of these reptiles at Taufikier. I went into the bathroom one afternoon for my customary tub, and there was a black snake curled round the water-pipe, apparently asleep. For the first moment I fancied that he had been put

there, dead, by a man who was on board, and who was, I knew, rather given to the making of practical jokes. I moved on. In an instant the small head shot forth, and missed me by an inch! I beat a hasty retreat and called for the sailors to clean the bathroom. Of course I stood close at hand to see that they did not unwittingly run any real danger, but the first man who went in was quite equal to the situation. He came out very hastily, murmuring that he was going to fetch another brush, and moved away. Then, as though it were an after-thought, he called back over his shoulder to one of his companions to go in and see if there was a bucket in the room. The other man went, but his self-control was not equal to that of the first. There was a volley of *ya salaams* from the interior for a brief second, and then he appeared at the door, as nearly white as a black man can be. Eventually the reptile was killed, but not before it had very nearly darted over the side, and many of the men who were trying to kill it had narrow escapes. How it got into the bathroom remains a mystery, the door when I went there first was tight shut, and it had not certainly been there half an hour before luncheon. It was a very long time before I recovered from the fright that it had given me, and I was careful to wear slippers when walking about the deck, a custom which I had never got into before.

This reminds me of an awful experience of one of my friends, who was somewhere in the wilds of Egypt or the Sudan, I forget which. Late one



evening he went into his tent to change his clothes, and had just started to take off his putties when someone called to him, and he went to the door. The conversation finished, he turned to enter the tent again, when, glancing down, he saw a big brown snake at his feet. With a yell, he rushed out in the desert. Glancing round a moment later as he thought that he felt something clutch at his leg, his feeling can be better imagined than described, when he saw that he was being followed by an awful apparition, which appeared in the dusk to be growing in size each moment. By this time, however, other men, attracted by his cries, came to his assistance, and it was only then discovered that the reptile of his imagination was in reality only his half-unwound puttie. I believe that he is known as "Snakes" throughout the country now.

I have always regretted that I did not keep some of the coloured snakes, they were well worth the trouble of preserving; but as is so often the case, I had nothing handy to cure them in when chance offered, and I always thought that I would have plenty more opportunities of getting them, with the consequence that I left the country without a specimen.

The rainy season, unhealthy and fever-giving though it is, is extremely fascinating by reason of the wonderful skies which it brings. It is impossible to describe the splendour of the storm-ridden sky, as the clouds gather angrily before a heavy fall of rain. There is every colour that it is impossible to



Photo by G. B. Middleton

A STORMY SUNSET - WHITE NILE ;

1931



imagine; from jet black to the lightest tint of purple. Restless and heaving, the clouds are awe-inspiring in their wonder; it is terrible, and in some way suggestive of an inferno. As the storm draws nearer, the gleams of lightning, which have been flickering away in the distance, grow each moment more brilliant; the darkness of the grotesque and changing mountains of clouds are lit up and rendered still more magnificent by the broad sheets of light, as they strike the mass in twain and linger for the fraction of a second, eagerly licking the fringe of the cloud. The rain when it falls to the tune of tropical thunder and to the illumination of lightning, like that which cleaves the blackness of an African night in the storm season, falls with a directness and force that is like the opening of the sluice gates of heaven. Fierce and blinding, the first quarter of a minute is sufficient to saturate any district, notwithstanding the fissures and cracks in the sun-dried land, which stand gaping and greedy for the first drop of moisture which comes with the rains.

The effect is magical, one day you have open plains of dull-coloured and stunted vegetation, the next and you walk knee-deep in a waving height of green grass; a week later and you must fight your way through a tangle that tops the head of the tallest man. How the animals must welcome it! There is no shooting now, cover is to be found in every yard of the country, food at every step, drink at every point where the footfall of a passing elephant or hippopotamus has left a cup in the earth.



Even before the rains have begun in the Sudan, the great river has shown signs of waking to a sense of its responsibility towards the dwellers on its banks, and is coming down with the marvellous energy which it retains during its passage through three thousand miles of sun-beaten and arid lands, every square inch of which is calling aloud for its quota of moisture from the river as it passes. Up in the mountains of Abyssinia the rains have already started to fall, and the mountain gorges are witnesses to the departure of the flood, which is destined to hold life in the people of the land of Egypt. It is necessary to follow the Nile in its courses through the Sudan, before it is possible to appreciate accurately the wonder of it all. The countries of Egypt and the Sudan are absolutely dependent upon that river, which the tourist sees languidly flowing under the piers of the Kasr-el-Nil bridge. If it stopped for a week, for a day even, the hand of Death would sweep the country clean, and desolate as the tombs which mark the resting-place of the Kings of Egypt, silent as the desert which stretches away into space from Omdurman, the valley of the Nile would teem with life no more, and the green of its banks would fade to rusty brown, though denied the luxury of decay by the absolute dryness of the atmosphere.

It is not wonderful that the natives of Egypt placed the life-giving spirit of the Nile high among the gods of the past. Searching around in all directions for a Deity which would satisfy their inherent desire for a god worthy of the devotion and homage

which they were so eager to impart, it is small wonder that they turned their attention to the flowing waters by which, and through which, they lived. Of its origin they knew nothing; it was sufficient knowledge that the land they loved was dependent upon its gifts, that they themselves existed solely by its grace.

Unfortunately I have never been to the great lakes in the south from which it springs; it was always my intention to leave the country by that route when I went away for the last time. However, I did not; I left the country with my leg in splints, and, according to the doctors, with a malarial microbe located in the joint of my knee.

When we returned to Taufikier the whole face of the country had changed; the plain to the back of the town was a beautiful mass of waving grass, the young trees were green and fresh with a luxuriance of leaf, and the ground was soft and springy under foot.

I recollect our arrival. It was in the early hours of the morning; we had left a wood station about 4 a.m., and arrived at Taufikier about three-quarters of an hour later. I had put my bed on the first deck, in the bows, and was suddenly awakened by the telegraph wire, which ran close to my head, ringing furiously. We were still some distance off the landing stage, and I could not imagine what had happened, till a storm of thoroughly British curses came floating on the morning air from the bank.

There I beheld a Bimbashi busy with his fishing

lines. He had put them out over-night and had caught all the passing sudd of the district, and he was feverishly trying to extricate the line before the boat caught the sudd, and bore everything, including the precious lengths of line, away into the open river. That was the first thing for which the day was noticeable; the second was that I met a wandering Greek trader in the village during the course of the day and purchased some "Turkish Delight" from him. Oh, how I had craved for sweets! I can remember it now; jam would not satisfy me, I wanted something sweeter still. I demolished two small boxes in a few minutes. I should think that this craving for sweets must be much the same as of a drunkard for liquor; it is not common, indeed I have only met one man who felt the need of it as much as I did. I do not know what caused it; later a kind friend wanted me to see a doctor, as he thought that I was getting diabetes!

From Taufikier we went straight down to Omdurman, but there was nothing of interest en route. The thing that impressed me most was the rain, which fell every night with clock-like regularity. I was used to it now and could sleep through it; but it was annoying nevertheless, especially when it found its way into the boxes containing the clothes that I proposed wearing the next morning. As we got near to Khartoum we ran out of the sphere of the rains, and the broad, gleaming desert was like an old friend extending outstretched hands of welcome.

## CHAPTER V

### ELEPHANT SHOOTING AND SUDD FIGHTING

SOUTH of Taufikier, the Bahr-el-Abyad runs in a narrow channel; it is deep and swift, and more like a river at home than it is in its broader courses further north. There are numerous villages on the left bank, some of them lying not more than a couple of miles apart, but their inhabitants keep entirely to themselves and have nothing to do with their neighbours. There is a fair amount of game here, white-eared cob, water-buck, and an occasional antelope of the rarer species.

There is a spot on the left bank that I shall always think of with affection, for I stopped there once for game, when I had been up in the sudd region for some time, and had no fresh meat except that of a hippopotamus which I had been fortunate enough to shoot on shore. Hippopotamus is not bad eating; but it is, as may be imagined, fearfully tough, and I had been rather spoilt by constant supplies of venison. On my return I spotted a herd of white-eared cob in a clearing on the bank, and landed to see if I could get a shot. The shooting season was really over; and the grass, shoulder high, made it very difficult to come up with the animals; no matter how cautiously you crept, they invariably saw or heard you before you could get in



your shot. At last I got desperate ; it was fearfully hot and also I was pressed for time, so seeing the head of an animal above the grass about a hundred yards away, I took a chance shot where I imagined the body would be. The head dropped and I was delighted ; then as I moved forward eagerly to retrieve, another fine young cob sprang up about fifty yards ahead of me, and went bounding away. As I had already fired, a second shot did not matter, even if the noise scared the herd away ; the one I had already killed would yield a quantity of meat, though we could well have done with another, as my men had, like myself, become accustomed to good living, and resented being without their usual supply of tender meat. I took a flying shot at it as it rose to bound over an ant-heap, and to my enormous surprise it fell to the shot. I was not a very good rifle-shot in those days ; I was always uncertain to a fearful degree, and could never be sure of my day. There were great rejoicings when the animals were brought in, and we stopped early that night to celebrate the double event—of getting out of the sudd region and having a renewed supply of venison.

But it was lonely work sometimes as the sun went down, and I think that I used to feel it more when I had been having a successful day with the gun than I did at other times. There was no one to talk it all over with ; there was nothing to do when the sun had once fallen, but feed, and drop into bed. Then, with thousands of mosquitoes making hideous music in my ears, I would read till I could read no more,



Photo by G. B. Middleton

WHITE-EARED COB

Figure 1. The effect of the concentration of the *Agrobacterium* suspension on the transformation efficiency of *Agrobacterium* strains. The number of transformed cells was determined by the number of colonies obtained on the selective medium. The results are the mean of three independent experiments. Error bars represent the standard deviation.

and fall to sleep as soon as possible. I must say that I never found much difficulty in doing this even when in normal health ; later, when I had developed a Sudan liver, it was agony sometimes to have to keep awake at all ; but I had every cause to be thankful that I was able to sleep when I was in the swamps of the Upper Nile.

The Bahr-el-Ghazal, which literally translated means the " River of the Gazelles," is a direct continuation of the White Nile, though it is in reality only a tributary ; the Bahr-el-Gebel (the River of the Mountains), which meets the Bahr-el-Ghazal at Lake No, at the northern end of the sudd, being the main river. The Bahr-el-Ghazal is well named, at least it would be if the word " game " or " antelope " had been substituted for gazelle, for it is full of antelope and other game from its source to its mouth.

It was up this river that I got first blood. On my trip up the Sobat I had necessarily to confine myself to the shooting of small game and birds ; but by the time I went up the Bahr-el-Ghazal I had a rifle, and got a fine young water-buck the first afternoon that I went out shooting. Incidentally I nearly got lost on my return home ; the man whom I had taken as guide was not half as sharp as the natives usually are, and when at last we turned to go back to the boat I found that we were wandering aimlessly about. It had been a dull afternoon, and it was impossible to tell where the sun had set. Eventually, just as we came to a khor and had decided to follow it, I saw a light in the distance and determined to move in its



direction ; anything was better than wandering in the growing dark. My guide protested that it would lead us far from the right road, but a light speaks of human habitation even though it be but a savage one, and I held to my resolution. It was fortunate that I did so, for it proved to be a head-light on board my own steamer, placed there by the thoughtful *reis* to guide us home through the forest. I was always careful to take a reliable guide on subsequent occasions ; it is not a pleasant thing to contemplate a night in the forests, especially if the coming dawn will in all probability leave you as much lost as you were at nightfall.

I always like the Bahr-el-Ghazal, though I have had some trying experiences there at times. It is exceedingly narrow ; there are few places where two steamers of ordinary beam could pass each other ; but its banks are for the most part fairly hard, and it is possible to land at almost any point in the northern reach of the river. Later, one comes into a certain amount of sudd, but even here there are usually places where it is easy to get ashore. One's chief occupation is to sit on the top deck with a good pair of glasses and watch the game browsing in the distance. White-eared cob are very plentiful, though there many other kinds of antelope too, including the rare Mrs. Grey's antelope, which is much sought after. I was never fortunate enough to get one ; Mr. G. B. Middleton, one of the keenest sportsmen whom I met in the Sudan, has, I believe, the record head of the country.



Photo by G. B. Middleton

MRS. GREY'S ANTELOPE



He shot several during the time that he was in the Sudan, and had very hard luck in connection with the animal at last. Under the later game laws, a man was only allowed to shoot one a year, as they are very rare. Mr. Middleton saw a fine young buck one morning, and immediately went out after it. The grass was long, and it was difficult to get a glimpse of it; however, after a long stalk he got a steady shot at about forty yards, and the animal fell. He walked on slowly, keeping his eye on the spot; but to his surprise, when he had got to within a yard or so of the place, he saw what he took to be the same animal, standing looking at him, about thirty yards further on. Thinking that it had recovered sufficiently from its first wound to move on, he fired again, and again the animal dropped. He walked on, but had not gone two yards before he stumbled over the first one he had killed. Thus he had two animals on his hands, when he should only have had one. He reported the matter to headquarters, explaining how the incident had occurred, and pointing out that the measurements of the heads were within an inch or so of each other, thus proving how very easy it was for the mistake to have happened. He was fined the maximum penalty of ten pounds, though it was his first offence against the game laws of the country. He was known as an enthusiastic and humane sportsman, and he had committed a mistake that nine men out of ten would have made under similar circumstances.

That was one instance of the way in which the



game laws were enforced ; this is another. An order was issued by his Excellency the Governor-General to the effect that anyone shooting at any animal other than a lion, leopard, or crocodile from a steamer or boat—I do not recollect the precise wording of the order, but I know that those animals alone were excepted—would be fined a penalty not exceeding one hundred pounds for the first offence. Shortly after this order had been issued, a party of higher officials of the Sudan Government went up river. I am not quite sure of the number, but I believe it was eight. An elephant was sighted up in the sudd region, and, according to the “social diary” which was published in Khartoum and circulated among the officials of the Government, the party, “with well-directed efforts from the steamer, succeeded in securing a fine tusker.” There was no fine imposed in this instance.

The Bahr-el-Ghazal district is noted for the huge apes which inhabit it ; they are fearsome-looking creatures, standing half as high as a man ; they invariably follow if you land to shoot, but they usually keep at a respectable distance from men. It is rather unnerving, all the same, to know that they are in constant attendance, for they are intensely powerful, and to shoot one would be almost like committing murder, so human do they look. There are weird and terrible tales of attacks which they have made on solitary women, and the native women are terrified of them.

It was also in the Bahr-el-Ghazal that I got my

first elephant. I had just passed through one of the most miserable weeks that I can remember on the trying duty of "waiting orders." The river had fallen considerably, and it was not possible to get to Meshr-el-Rek. This little town lies at the southernmost end of the Bahr-el-Ghazal, and in the days before the Jur River was opened for traffic, it was the dumping-place for stores *en route* to Wau and other towns of the interior of the province. At the time of the rains it is literally an island; there is scarcely any current in the river which passes it, and all round lie mosquito-infested swamps, through which troops and carriers had to wade in order to get to the interior. At times of low water stores are taken up the Bahr-el-Ghazal to a point within about twenty-five miles of the town, and are there transferred to shallow-draught barges, which are towed the remainder of the distance by miniature stern-wheel steamers which have been specially built for use on the rivers where the navigation of larger craft is impossible.

I was instructed to await the arrival of one of these shallow-draught stern-wheelers which was at that time up the River Jur, a tributary of the Bahr-el-Ghazal which runs up to Wau, the capital of the province. I dared not move, as dispatches of importance were expected, and it was quite possible that on her arrival she would be too short of fuel to proceed any further north. It was necessary for a boat of even so shallow a draught as she was to come down through the Jur as light as she possibly could.

There was an ever present danger of being landed high and dry in the midst of a reeking swamp when once the river had started to fall. For two days and two nights I lay anchored in the lake which marked the limit of navigable water, the swamp on either side prevented my landing, and I had nothing to do except take pot shots at such crocodiles as were obliging enough to put their heads above water for a moment.

At half-past three I had tea, at half-past five my bath, at six my dinner. These early hours were forced upon me by my enemies, the mosquitoes. It was impossible to bath when once the sun got low, for they filled the bathroom; as soon as the light got the least bit dim, out they would come in myriads. For the same reason it was impossible to dine after sunset, so I used to get it all over well before the night, and by the time it was really dark I was safe beneath my curtain. But it was a miserable existence, and for the first and only time I felt inclined to drink, to drink for the sake of the comfort of the spirit. Indeed, so much did I wish it, that I gave up even my customary peg of whisky; it may have been weak, but I had seen too many strong men go under, as the glamour of the whisky or brandy bottle caught hold of their imaginations, to give myself the chance of doing likewise. But on the third day we saw a thin streak of smoke on the distant horizon, and three hours later I was steaming down stream again with the mails on board.

I intended going as far as a good shooting spot that I knew of that afternoon, and stopping there

to try and get some fresh meat. I had any amount of time, as there would not be another boat to meet me at Taufikier for another two days, so I made up my mind to have as good a time as possible now that I was at last free of the accursed swamp.

My original plans, however, fell through; for on rounding a point in the upper part of the river, we suddenly came upon two elephants within about fifty yards of the boat. It happened to be a spot where we could land, and with an exceedingly lucky shot at over a hundred yards I got the biggest of the animals through the brain. Anyone who has done elephant shooting will know that it *was* purely luck, for the brain is tiny; I only attempted the shot on one other occasion, and then missed badly at about twenty yards. But this time he fell to the shot, and I started wading out to him. It was slow going, for the whole place was more or less a swamp, and if I happened to step into an elephant track it meant being up to my neck in water at once.

Eventually, however, we saw his huge back like an amateur mountain in front of us. My boy was with me, and we advanced with extreme caution. There was a possibility that he was only wounded, and we would have looked silly had he risen, for the ground in which he was in his element was no joke to us. He was of course stone dead, and as soon as the fact was evident to those on board, they came flocking out as hard as they could. The animal proved to be an exceptionally fine tusker; he was, in fact, the record for an elephant shot in the Sudan



in those days, though Sir William Garstin got a considerably larger one off the Bahr-el-Gebel a couple of years later. Each tusk weighed the same to an ounce, 112 lbs. The longest was 7 ft. 10 ins., and the other a few inches shorter.

I set a gang on at once to cut out the tusks, a work which takes a very long time. It means cutting right through the jaw with axes, and of course care has to be taken not to injure the root of the tusk in the process. I had great difficulty in getting the men to settle to it, so anxious were they not to miss any *bonne-bouche* of the meat that the others were busily engaged in obtaining. There is plenty of meat on an elephant, and one would have thought that there could be no cause for quarrelling, but I have never seen anything to equal the scramble and the savagery which I saw that day. It was truly a horrible sight, but it was worth seeing once, as an evidence of the savagery which lies latent in the heart of the people. It indeed almost exceeded savagery; my crew that day were beasts of prey; saturated with blood and drunk with greed, they gave me an insight into their character which astounded me. The animal had fallen as it stood; it had not turned over, and its feet were firmly embedded in the swamp. The attack of the natives was therefore made from its back, and in a very short time the trouble began. It was sickening, but at the same time its barbarity made it bearable. Within a few minutes of their arrival from the boat, there were three or four of the strongest men on the

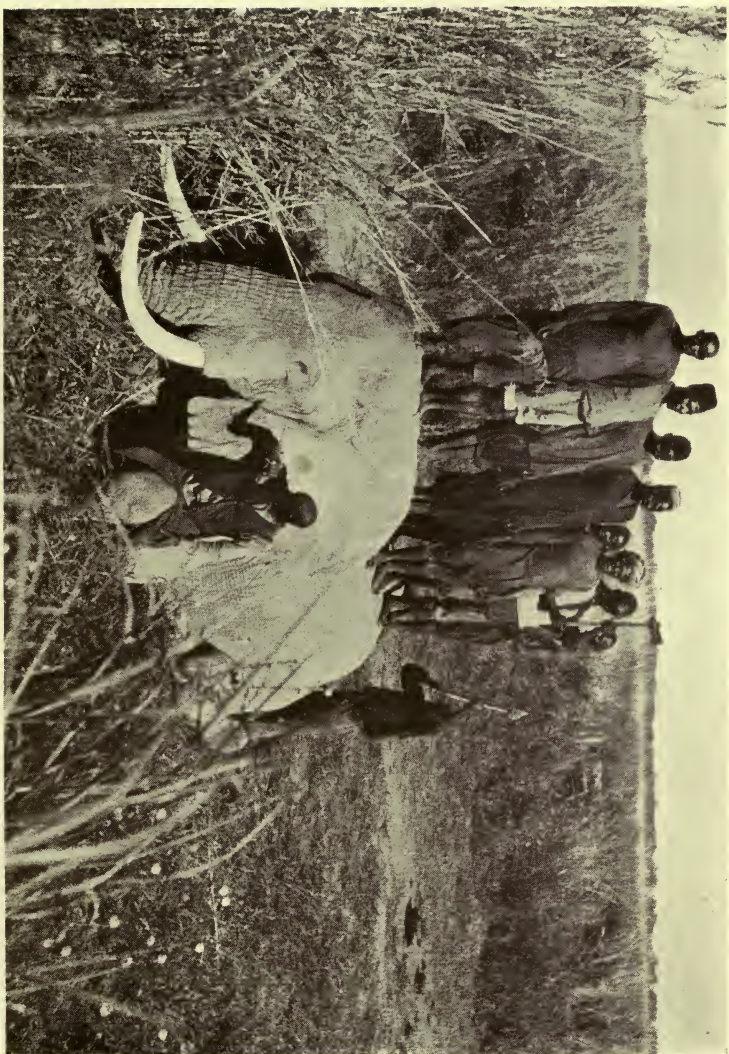


Photo by G. B. Middleton

WHITE NILE ELEPHANT—THE BEGINNING OF THE END



top of the animal, hacking, tearing away at the flesh ; an entry to the carcase was obtained, and from that moment they lost all sense of human fellowship ; they were dogs wrangling over a bone. A man would seize hold of a choice scrap, and prepare to cut it off, another would see him, and dropping the piece which he had been endeavouring to get before, he would make a slash at the choicer morsel in possession of his companion. Many men were badly wounded and came to me for treatment eventually, but not before the day was done and there was no further chance of losing any meat. A more horrible sight than my crew presented, when at last they straggled in from the swamp, it would be impossible to imagine ; but the moment that they had left the mangled remains of the elephant, they were the laughing crowd of yesterday, happier, too, by reason of the feast in store.

We moved on for about a mile or so that night, till we came to an open spot where there was good, dry ground ; and here the men landed and prepared their meal. There was nothing in the nature of an orgy now ; they were enjoying themselves in the rational, attractive manner of the country. The fires which they had kindled all round their feeding-place served to keep the greater numbers of the mosquitoes away ; but even without this precaution they were not nearly so troublesome here as they had been in the more swampy districts which we had just left.

I went out with the shot-gun while there was still



enough light to shoot, and got some birds for my dinner; my boy netted some excellent fish as soon as we stopped, so we all did very well that night, and I remember how quickly the discomforts of the few previous days departed from the minds of all. For myself, I have seldom been more contented than I was that night; the noise of the natives clapping their hands to the tune of an Eastern lilt a couple of hundred yards away mingled with the roar of a distant lion in the west, as I passed into the drowsy realms of sleep.

I went out shooting again the next morning, but got nothing to speak of, so, though I had still much time on my hands before I need put in an appearance at Taufikier, I decided to move on and anchor late in the afternoon at another spot where game was plentiful.

It was well that I came to this decision, for we had not gone more than four or five miles when suddenly the river ceased; it was lost in a mass of vegetation, which had collected since I passed up and now entirely blocked our passage. It is a matter of some difficulty to clear these obstructions away, even when one is proceeding up stream and can simply pull the stuff back, bit by bit, and let it float down the current; but it is infinitely worse when the boat is up stream of the block, because then it has to be cut out and piled on the banks. It is weary work, but fortunately on the present occasion the obstruction was composed of a small cabbage-like growth, which was not very hard to remove; indeed,

it would have been possible to steam through it, but that the pumps became choked and refused to work. The only way of remedying this was to send a man under the boat to where the uptake was placed, he would hang on to a cord from the side and dive down, groping about till he found the obstruction. This occurred about every five minutes, and it was wonderful to see how the men kept at it without a murmur for hours together. I suppose they realised that the present work was child's play, to what they might have been called upon to do.

One never knows what is going to happen in the Bahr-el-Ghazal. I recollect on one occasion we entered Lake No from the north, just before sunset. It was a cloudy day, and I was thanking the Powers that Be that my way lay in the Bahr-el-Ghazal rather than in the Bahr-el-Gebel, where the smell of the sudd is almost overpowering at times, especially on dull days. We crossed the lake, and before us lay an open channel some couple of hundred yards wide, beyond which the river narrowed till it was barely broad enough for one boat to pass through. A wind sprang up just as we entered the broader channel, and suddenly I became aware that the whole of the surrounding vegetation to the east was bearing in upon us. We immediately put on full steam, but even so were not quite in time to save ourselves. Two minutes later it was possible to get off the boat at any point without wetting one's feet. However, we only had a few yards to go, and managed to pull through by placing the anchor some distance

ahead of the boat, and then winding up with the winch, at the same time going full steam ahead with the engines.

I remember that trip well. It was full of excitement all through. The following morning a native woman threw herself overboard, shrieking as she went. She was promptly rescued and brought to me. She informed me that it was impossible for her to get on with her husband, and she had therefore sought to commit suicide. The sergeant told me, in a stage whisper, that she had declared she would do the same thing again the moment that she was released. She was the heroine of the moment. It seemed a pity to have to keep her under guard, for there was plenty of other work for the men to do, so I told her that I would not punish her on this occasion, but that if she went overboard again she might stop there; and I gave orders to the crew in her hearing that there was to be no further attempt to rescue her if she tried to commit suicide a second time. She was furious, and not a little hurt, I think; it was not treating her with the respect which she imagined she deserved; but though grumbling and decidedly sulky, she went back to her husband and made no further attempt to drown herself.

Matrimonial infelicity appeared to be contagious at that time, for it was on the same trip that a lady from the village of Meshr-el-Rek came on board with all her personal belongings, including three children, and announced her intention of remaining

as my servant. Ordinary persuasion was useless ; she could not be induced to move ; and eventually she had to be turned off by soldiers.

I saw her again a few months later, when she appeared to have forgotten her former troubles, and to be perfectly happy and contented.

On the return journey of this eventful trip we found the whole of the broader channel entirely blocked, and for forty-eight hours we worked to get into the clear water to the north. We moved along inch by inch, sometimes stopping entirely, for hours, as the vegetation got rammed under the boat, or interfered with the working of the paddle. We would put the anchor out about fifty yards ahead and then work up to it, when it would again be sent forward. The men worked with unceasing energy ; there were no complaints ; the dawn would see them in their places labouring away with all their might, the noonday sun would strike down on their backs as they clambered through the swamp carrying a heavy anchor to its next position ; sunset would see them contentedly squatted round their bowls of food on the deck ; an hour later, and all was silence as they took their well-deserved rest.

At one time I began to be afraid that I should have to send a runner to Taufikier for assistance ; we had worked forward about fifty yards ; it was impossible to take more than a couple of turns with the engine without the risk of smashing the wheel, for by this time there was almost as much vegetation under the boat as there was around us.



It was an anxious time, as we were naturally consuming a large amount of fuel every hour, for we had to keep up full steam for the winch; but notwithstanding all this there is some fascination in the northern regions of the Bahr-el-Ghazal, which goes a long way to counteract the depressing effects of such occurrences as this. There is always something to see, large herds of game are nearly always visible in the distance, elephant and ostrich appear occasionally, and added to this there is the charm of feeling that you are in the heart of the wilderness; where every breath of air is laden with the scent of sun-dried grass, where every sound is from the throat of nature. There is not much evil in the world when seen from such a place as this; even the mosquitoes, ashamed of their murderous habits, slink away abashed to the swamps of the south, or to the filthy hovels of the north, and you are left in peace to watch the glory of the stars as they signal one to another of secrets passing the understanding of man, and which are known only to their children, the peoples of the plains and jungles about you.

We had entered the obstructed channel at day-break one morning, and on the evening of the third day we still had about twenty yards to cover, before we would reach the open river ahead. Darkness was falling, and at length the *reis* came to me and asked if the men might stop for the night. It seemed hopeless that we could get through, so I consented. As he turned to leave me, a light breeze sprang up,

the vegetation with which we had been fighting for so many weary hours receded under its pressure, and in a few seconds there was a channel fully a hundred yards in our wake, and one of the same width in front of us, where a few minutes before the men had been struggling on practically dry land.

But I have wandered far from the trip of which I was writing originally, where the obstruction was only of a cabbage-like vegetation. On this occasion we got through in about two hours, but it upset all thoughts of shooting for the rest of the trip. There always remained the possibility of our being stuck further to the north, and though, as it turned out, the way was clear, it was too present a danger to risk at the time.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE BAHR-EL-GHAZAL, ITS INHABITANTS AND SPORT

THE sky-line of the plain as it meets the eye from the Bahr-el-Ghazal River marked the limit of the white men's knowledge of the tribes which inhabit these parts; further south the English had penetrated through and through the country, but this district had been left unexplored and uncared for. There would be no immediate advantage in pressing through into these dominions; from all reports there is nothing that renders such an action necessary, and the inhabitants would in all probability be savages. The tribes which live on the plains in the northern stretches of the Bahr-el-Ghazal are timid even yet; but every day will bring them a greater confidence in the Government, when they find that they are left in peace from year to year, and that there is no longer any need to fear the raids of slave-traders. An expedition would therefore do no more than bring about—at an increased cost—the ends which are already being accomplished by passive means. In the interior, to the south of the Bahr-el-Ghazal, the French were, of course, the pioneers of civilisation, and the natives were already trained to a rough knowledge of white people and

their methods of administration before we took on the task of governing them. But though this is the case, the laws of the country are little altered in their essentials from the day when we took it over; for once, England has not been over eager to graft changes on a country that is not ready for them.

The following instance will prove how little the laws of the ancient régime of might had been altered. A short time after my arrival in the Sudan, a native of this province was caught red-handed in the act of stealing his neighbour's grain while it was still barely ripe. The laws of the country have one penalty for a crime of this nature: immediate death. The unfortunate man was saved from the hands of the surrounding tribe with difficulty, and was brought before the commanding officer of the district for trial. The officer was well known for the leniency of his views towards the native, and a certain amount of apprehension was caused in the province lest he should deal too lightly with the offence. But even he, lenient and humane as he undoubtedly was, after hearing the evidence, gave his judgment in accordance with the unwritten law of centuries. "Take him away and let him be shot at daybreak; but let him dig his grave first, or otherwise we may have trouble with hyenas."

It is a ghastly code, and one which, it is almost needless to say, will be gradually removed; but it is necessary to move slowly if we are to retain the confidence of the people with whom we have to deal, and that is, after all, the thing which is of the greatest



importance. During the whole time that I was in the Sudan I never came across a case of wilful cruelty on the part of an Englishman towards a native ; as a general rule they are on the best of terms with each other, and the natives honestly respect the average Englishman.

The country is fortunate in its choice of officials, and this is an important point, for one man who is not fitted for his post is liable to do more harm in three months than can be undone in a year. Occasionally one comes across an Englishman who is given to excessive drinking, but the Sirdar is very strict on this point, and it is an understood thing now that if a Government employé cannot keep sober he has to go. The natives know this, and the moral effect is excellent. The Sudanese as a race are sober enough themselves, and look with the greatest contempt on those who cannot control their appetite in this direction, though some of them it is true have developed a taste for strong liquors, thanks to the Europeans who have brought the purchase of spirits within their reach.

On one occasion I left Omdurman on the first day of a native feast. It was hard for my crew, but it could not be avoided. All went well by day, but at night I fancied that the behaviour of some of the men was rather strange ; however, there was nothing serious, so I turned in as usual, after a final look round at about eleven o'clock. I had just got to bed when I found that the speed of the boat was becoming slower and slower, until at last we nearly

stopped. Knowing that we were in good water, I could not understand it at all, and eventually went below. I found one fireman on duty instead of two ; at least he was at his post, though it can scarcely be said that he was on duty ; he sat on a log of wood some distance from the stokehold, and sang a song of the deepest melancholy. The pathos of it, indeed, appeared to overcome him at times, for he would stop for a moment before resuming with quite a cheerful jerk as though determined to be happy at all costs. I shook him, and pounded him, but all to no effect—he was gloriously and hopelessly drunk. A hurried investigation revealed the rest of the stokehold crew in much the same condition, lying in various attitudes about the deck, so I stoked a little myself in order to prevent the boat from stopping altogether, and then called the sailors below.

When we were fairly under way again I searched the ship for the liquor which I knew would be stowed away in one of the holds, and sure enough I discovered it at last. It was liquor certainly, but how any human being could manage to consume it and live, is more than I can say, for to me it seemed to be the very rankest of all rank turpentine. I treated the drunken stokers to a liberal dose of Nile water, buckets of it, and stopped the boat for the night. The men were too drunk to understand anything properly, and I left them oblivious of the fact that I had discovered their supply of poison. Great was the lamentation later in the night, when, with throats parched and burning, they sought the secret hoard

in the hold and found that it had disappeared. Next morning I thought that the natural pain which the men were suffering was almost sufficient punishment, so I refrained from fining them, and contented myself with doubling their duty for three days. That was the only case of drunkenness among my crew, which I had to deal with during the whole of my time in the Sudan.

This has been rather a digression from the subject of crime in the Bahr-el-Ghazal Province ; but it will be understood that the severity with which the natives have to be treated until they can be brought to realise that mercy does not necessarily mean weakness, could never be administered with safety, unless the officials chosen for the task were men of undoubted sobriety and self-restraint.

The residents of the Northern Sudan regard the dwellers of the south as an entirely inferior race, as slaves in fact, just in the same way as the Egyptian regards the Sudanese as a race of slaves. There is some justification for the former belief ; there is, in my mind, absolutely none for the latter. For taking them right through, and putting education entirely apart for the moment, the Sudanie is decidedly more capable, and has a greater supply of brains than the Egyptian. With education the Sudanese will develop—they are already developing—into a smart and thoroughly capable race, and, with the average man, it is noticeable that the Sudanie is far more eager to assimilate knowledge than the Egyptian. It is true that among the former there is no educated class at



Photo by G. B. Middleton





present ; there is no aristocracy as there is in Egypt, but among the lower orders I should say that the Sudanese are the superior race.

There is nothing that annoys a native of the Sudan more than to be called a woman ; I had occasion once to send the men ashore to cut wood in a very rough part of forest land in the Bahr-el-Ghazal, where every tree was full of thorns. Most of the men attacked the job with their usual spirit ; the work had got to be done, therefore it was no use delaying it. One man, however, would not work ; he said the thorns cut his hands ; he was sick ; he had fever ; and he made every other excuse for shirking that he could invent. Eventually, on finding him slacking for the fiftieth time, I called him and the head-man up to me, and asked the latter if he did not think that the other was a woman in disguise. He caught the idea immediately, and said that he thought he must be, and it was therefore quite unfair to expect him to work like the men. After considering what should be done with him he was told to go back to the boat, bathe his hands and lie down in the shade. It was a somewhat difficult matter to persuade him to leave the party then, but he was forced to do so ; however, when I went out an hour later he was one of the most energetic of the workers in the forest, and I never caught him slacking again during the months that he was in my employment.

I saw a most interesting sight while in the Bahr-el-Ghazal—an elephant being stalked and killed by another man. It was noon ; we had just emerged

from the swampy regions to open ground, and we spotted three fine elephants on the west bank. It was decided that an officer who was on board, a Captain Rawson, who had been many months in the interior without having been fortunate enough to come across any of these animals, should have the chance now. The beasts were slowly moving away from the river, and had not, I believe, been frightened by the approach of the boat. Captain Rawson went on shore, armed with a double-barrelled '400 Express, and from the bridge of the boat I was able to see everything that happened. There was fortunately sufficient breeze blowing from a settled direction to enable him to keep to the lee-side of the beasts without fear of being winded; but it was hard going, and it was some time before he could get near to them, as they were slowly but steadily proceeding inland. Eventually, when he got to within about sixty or eighty yards, the hindmost of the three suddenly waved its trunk in the air; satisfied itself that there was something unhealthy in the district, and perceptibly increased its pace. We, from the bridge, were uncertain whether they were visible to Captain Rawson from where he stood, and we were beginning to fear that he would lose them, when suddenly our doubts were set at rest by one of them dashing forward at a pace that made it sufficiently evident that there was a shot lodged in its body. It blundered on, apparently not badly wounded to judge by the pace it made; but it did not last; one moment it was covering the ground at

express speed, the next it had sunk to the ground, dying. I hastened ashore with the men, and by the time we came to where the animal lay it was stone dead. Only the one shot had been fired, yet the beast had managed to travel sixty-three yards with a .400 bullet through the top of its heart. We measured the distance from the spot where the altered spoor marked the beginning of its last rush. It was a huge bull elephant, but the tusks were disappointing, they were scarcely larger than cow ivory. It was the first and only time that I saw another man shoot an elephant, and the danger was then ever so much more apparent than it is when, full of excitement, you are conducting the sport yourself.

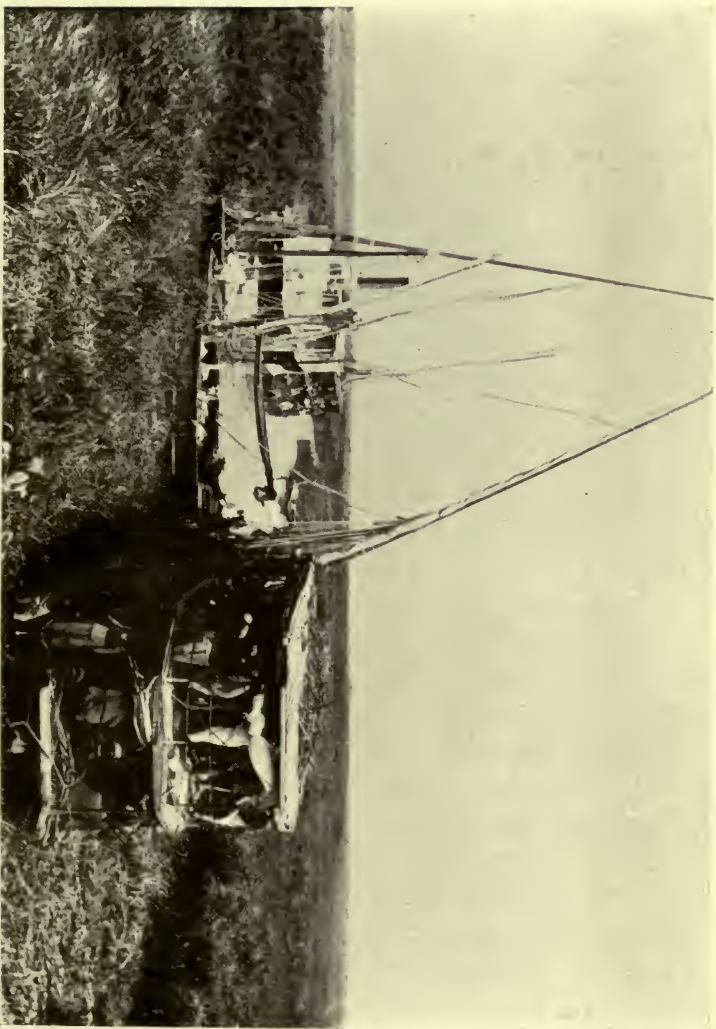
There have been some very fine specimens of the eland shot in the interior of the Bahr-el-Ghazal Province, perhaps the finest being that shot by the late Captain Haymes, R.A.M.C., which he left in his will to the Turf Club, Cairo. Sitatunga also inhabit the swamps ; but they are rare, and very few of them have been shot. They live entirely in the most marshy districts, and they are consequently very difficult to see. The first one that was shot in the Bahr-el-Ghazal was, as usually happens, killed by a man who cared little or nothing for sport. He was out one morning with his rifle when a sitatunga crossed his path, and then stood waiting patiently to be shot at. It is an extraordinary thing, the way that so often the best heads fall to the lot of men who do not really care twopence for them.

There are a few koodoo near Kordofan, and it



was everyone's ambition to get one when they were sent into the district. One Thursday night, the eve of the weekly holiday, the men in the mess were as usual planning the sport for the following day, and the subject of the ever-elusive koodoo cropped up in its turn. Everybody was interested except one man, whose only sport consisted in pottering round the camp with a shot-gun after pigeon. The conversation at last quite overcame him ; he was being bored to death, so he rose and said, with no little sarcasm, that he would go to bed, " so as to be out early with the rifle." Nobody took much notice, and he added, as a parting shot, " Koodoo, anyone can shoot a koodoo ; I'll shoot one to-morrow before breakfast." He did. He was very late getting up ; all the other men were long away when his servant came and said that a native had come in with the news that there was one of these animals within half a mile of camp. Mindful of his boast, and excited at last, he went out ; got an easy shot, and killed it at short range. An hour later his companions returned and found him lounging at the breakfast-table, and it was some time before he drawled out his news with an affectation of indifference which he must have been far from feeling.

The Bahr-el-Ghazal presents many difficulties of navigation. The first part of the river, after leaving the White Nile, is, as I have said, comparatively broad, but there is always the danger of it being choked with floating vegetation. It is not like the Bahr-el-Gebel, where a couple of seasons' work would



"SUDDER" IN THE BAHR-EL-GHAZAL



put everything in order ; for during the greater part of the year there is not sufficient water to carry the vegetation down on its current. The river, too, is constantly turning and twisting, and this makes matters worse, as under these circumstances the stuff naturally accumulates more quickly. Further up, the difficulty lies in sheer lack of water ; it would never be possible to get as far as Meshr-el-Rek during the months of low Nile unless all the water from the surrounding swamps could be diverted into a main channel. This would mean tremendous work, which would not be justified by the results obtainable, since it is possible to accumulate sufficient stores during the months of flood to last the inhabitants for the rest of the year. Here, of course, as in other parts of the Sudan, we are never entirely without the danger of a sudden rising of the natives, though each succeeding year renders the probability of such an event more remote.

It was in the Bahr-el-Ghazal that Mr. Scott-Barbour met his death, treacherously murdered by a presumably friendly tribe. He had camped near a native village, and the natives came during the day to pay him the customary visit. While stooping down to pour out some milk for his guests he was stabbed in the back, and killed instantaneously. The tribe then turned their attention to his following, all of whom, with the exception of one man, perished. The object of their slaughter was plunder, but, though successful at the time, the tribe paid heavily for it eventually, when the avenging forces of the



Government marched through their territory, shooting at sight, and burning every village as they passed. Thus they paid the price of a "white man slain," and peace reigned for some years, till Captain Haymes, one of the most popular officers in the Egyptian army, was killed in the same province. But in his case the first thrust was not immediately fatal, and he at least had the satisfaction of dying with his face to the treacherous brutes who attacked him; he emptied the five chambers of his revolver before he died, and each shot claimed its man.

Curiously enough, both these officers made their last trip to the south on my boat. In the case of the former, it was an ill-fated journey from the start, for we had not been two days out of Omdurman when his boy, a nice bright lad, who had been with him for four years, fell overboard, and was drowned. He was seen to fall, the waters closed over his head, and he was seen no more; he never rose to the surface, and though we cruised about for an hour afterwards, we could find no trace of him.

It is a curious thing, the way in which the Nile holds its victims. Time and time again I have seen men fall in, never to return; they apparently go to the bottom and stay there; sometimes they appear weeks later, but at the time they are lost absolutely.

Occasionally, of course, a crocodile gets hold of them as they enter the water, but even where none of these animals are about the effect is the same; they fall like stones, and remain under water. The Nile claims a big yearly tribute from the people of the

Sudan, and I suppose it is due to their inherent fatalism that they appear to care so little. Immediately after the death of one of their number they are more careful ; but the next day they have forgotten it, or are careless of the danger of sharing a like fate. The manner in which most of the accidents occur is this. A barge is towed alongside a steamer, and is usually full of natives. They go to the after-end to draw water from the river, and to do so they squat down on the edge of the barge. Something jerks the bucket, or the barge lurches against the steamer, or they lose their balance from some similar cause, and over they go. Nothing will stop them ; they have done it before, they will do it again ; it is the recognised way of drawing water.

The Bahr-el-Ghazal literally teems with fish, some of which are very good eating. In the River Jur, which I have alluded to above, the greatest difficulties of navigation are experienced, as the river is so narrow that there is scarcely room for the boat to move ; and progress is made by the winch for several miles. An anchor is thrown out, and the boat is pulled up to it on the winch, and so on. At the corners, the entire crew turn out and pull her round inch by inch. The fish get rather a bad time of it at these points ; they do not know where to go. It usually ends with their leaping blindly out of the water to escape being crushed between the side of the boat and the bank, but as a rule it is simply a case of " out of the frying-pan into the fire," for they frequently fall on the lower deck of the steamer,

and make their appearance a little later on at the dinner-table. The river also abounds in water-leeches, and, not unnaturally, the men rather object to going overboard here if they can avoid it, as they are certain to be attacked if they do. One got firmly attached to my cloth putty one day, when I had been forced to wade back to the boat from the shore. I came upon it unexpectedly; I thought it was a leaf, and tried to brush it off. It haunted me for weeks.

There was also a lively little eel-shaped specimen, which, if the men are to be believed, treated them to electric shocks as they swum past them. I never experienced the shock myself, and I never knew whether to believe the tale or not, for the Sudanese are very fluent romancers at times.

I remember once, when I was new to the country and its ways, a man came to me at a wooding station, to tell me that he had been bitten by a scorpion and to ask for medicine. I had been told that the treatment on these occasions was to cut the place of the sting, rub in ammonia, and then drink half a tumbler of neat whisky. I cut the wound very gingerly—I was new to surgery in those days—put on the ammonia with a light hand, knowing from personal experience how it stung in a cut, and administered the whisky lavishly. Ten minutes later another man appeared, moaning heavily, and holding his finger. He also had been stung, and I went through the same performance with him. Scarcely had he gone when another appeared. “An awful place this for scor-

pions," I thought, but went through the same formula. Then I sat down, and witnessed an interesting and instructive little bit of by-play, through the reflection in the mirror of my cabin. Two men were quarrelling. I did not understand sufficient Arabic to know what the trouble was, but at length one of them broke away from the other, and changing his expression with a quickness that would have made his fortune on the stage, rounded the corner to where I was sitting. He moaned in the approved style and nursed his hand. He had been stung on the third finger. I fetched the lance, and cut the wound; I went rather deep as he appeared to be in so much pain, then I applied the ammonia, and rubbed it in well, and, this done, spoke one of my words of Arabic, "khalas," which, being interpreted, means "finished." He did not appear to be satisfied, so I called my boy, who could understand my very pigeon Arabic, to explain that I feared the smell of the whisky was attracting the scorpions, and that there would be no further free drinks administered that night! There was a roar of laughter from behind the corner, where, it appeared, the entire crew had assembled to see what was happening.

We had no further trouble with scorpions that night.

Of all the places that I would visit in the White Nile districts of the southern Sudan, were I to return to the country, I would choose the Bahr-el-Ghazal. To me it represents Africa more fully than any other spot in those regions. The interior is rich in both



rubber and ivory ; fruit grows well, and some of the finest bananas that I have ever seen were grown at Wau, the capital of the province. Unfortunately, many of the rubber trees were almost ruined by having been badly tapped. I believe there is an expert in charge of the plantations now, but in any case, no very great revenue can accrue from the cultivation of rubber, or any other tree, until there is a more assured mode of transport to the north than there is at present. But things are improving daily ; it is only within the past four years that boats have been able to reach Wau at all. Formerly, as I have said, all transport was landed at Meshr-el-Rek, and carried across country to the capital by native carriers. This province has been a good deal before the public at different times by reason of its troubles with the Congo State which adjoins it. Had the letter of the agreement originally made between Britain and Belgium been adhered to, the Bahr-el-Ghazal should have been included as Free State territories, and one or two enterprising Belgian officers attempted to take the matter of boundaries in their own hands while I was in the Sudan. In each case, however, their Government wisely decided that the thing was not worth a fight, and the troops were ordered to withdraw. The most interesting occurrences, however, in connection with these incidents, took place on the White Nile, and will be referred to later on.

The natives of this province are morally the exact antithesis of the natives of the Sobat River. They

are absolutely without morals, as far as the general populace are concerned; they are also further advanced in some of the tenets of civilisation, and wear loin cloths, usually of skins or crudely treated leather. They are possessed with a remarkable idea of form, and would, I should say, make splendid workmen at the finer trades if they were properly trained. Even under present circumstances their work in ivory is wonderful. I bought some carved ivory rings from the natives there, which are so beautifully made that it is almost impossible to realise that they could have been turned out by untrained workmen, who had no tools except a spear, and, perhaps, a clumsy hunting-knife. They are as round as though they had been turned out in a lathe, and are decorated with circular designs of perfect symmetry and regularity; indeed, they are so well finished that people usually passed over them as being articles brought out from England, or at least made in Egypt with the aid of proper machinery.

Further in the interior there are tribes which still continue in the darkness and horror of cannibalism, though, as far as can be gathered, it is only an occasional luxury, and not one that is regularly indulged in. It was in the country of the cannibals that Armstrong Bey lost his life while elephant shooting. An expedition with Armstrong in command had been sent into their country, but just as they entered the scene of the projected operations some elephants of the district attracted him, and he

went out after them. Exactly how the tragedy happened will never quite be known ; he apparently fired at and wounded a big tusker ; the next moment he was picked up and thrown yards into the air, and he broke his neck in the fall. The command of the little party then devolved on Colour-Sergeant Bordman, who acquitted himself admirably, and was awarded the medal for "Distinguished Service in the Field." He did not, however, live very long to enjoy his distinction ; he came down to Khartoum, and then went on leave and got married, but the venom of the climate had got thoroughly into his blood, and though he was suffering from no actual disease, he died a few months later.

The Bahr-el-Ghazal has claimed a large number of English lives since the recapture of the Sudan. Some men were killed in the field as I have related, some died of fever ; others paid the debt of the pioneer when they had left the district and were apparently out of harm's way. Though comparatively few white men have died of it here, blackwater fever is the most dreaded of the diseases of the place. The whole province can hardly be said to have been exploited thoroughly as yet, though each year a new corner is examined and brought within the limits of comparative civilisation. An expedition of about four or five years ago brought to light a new breed of dogs, which were found in the possession of the Nuym Nuym tribe. These animals are something like the ordinary English fox-terrier, but are much longer in the body, and their ears are differently shaped.

The officers of the expedition tell awful tales of how when they arrived they found some of these poor beasts—still alive—on the fire, being slowly cooked as a dainty for the dinner-table ; and I believe it is really true that they are considered culinary luxuries.

During the time of the French Occupation of the Bahr-el-Ghazal, the officers were in the habit of marrying native women according to local law. The customs of the English, therefore, were regarded with some disapprobation at first, though the inhabitants have long ceased to look upon the more exclusive habits of the new occupants in the light of an affront to their women, as they were originally inclined to do.

From an Englishman's point of view, one of the chief disadvantages of this region of the Sudan is, that horses, or even mules, will not live for more than a few months, and then only in the dry season. All attempts to keep them during the wet months have proved futile, the difficulty arising principally through the presence of a fly, not unlike, though I believe distinct from, the tsetse fly, which is the curse of so many regions of Africa.

But, notwithstanding climatic and other disadvantages, the lives of the men in the interior must have been holidays in contrast to the lives of those who were deputed by the Government to cut a way through the Jur River to Wau. The swamps on either side make it impossible to land except at very few points, and the mosquitoes were unfailing in their attentions for the greater part of the time.



This task primarily devolved upon Lieutenant Drury, R.N., who subsequently worked at the sudd. I remember that all the different stages of this stream were named very much to the point. When first I went up the river I was told to go as far as "Godelphus Island." This island proved to be a small block of dry land in the midst of desolate swamps; it was not until I arrived there that I learned the meaning of the name. Then I was told that it was the point where the cutting expedition had stuck for the longest period of the time, and it had at last been christened "God help us" by the despairing captain; time had brought about the corruption of the phrase, and the name "Godelphus" is official now.

Food, which was formerly plentiful and exceedingly cheap at all the villages on the main river, is now almost impossible to obtain; sheep at one time cost from one to two shillings each, now it is difficult to buy them at all. However, where it is possible to land, there is generally the certainty of game of sorts; if nothing larger presents itself there is always guinea-fowl to fill the pot when the time comes for dinner. I think that I have tasted guinea-fowl cooked in every imaginable form, and often, even when I was hungry, I have been forced to refuse it; if one has to take it regularly without change for any length of time it becomes as much to be dreaded as mixed tinned rations, and anyone who has lived out of the reach of fresh meat will know what that means.

Unlike the natives of the Sudan generally, the

inhabitants of the Bahr-el-Ghazal will eat anything. At the time of one of the small expeditions we were taking camels up; one died and was thrown overboard. When we returned a couple of days later we found that it had been carefully hauled ashore as an edible by the natives, and its bones lay bare on the bank of the river. The contempt of my crew for this behaviour was worth anything to see. "Of course, what could be expected from people such as these, with no learning," said one of my stokers, who, by the way, was the nearest approach to the missing link of Darwin's imagination than anything else that I have come across.

Oh! the Bahr-el-Ghazal with its swamps and fevers, its mosquitoes and its flies! Everyone curses it, and everyone has a tender recollection for it when they have left it. Its great plains spotted with game, its forests, and even its swamps attract one at the last. It is a primitive land appealing to all that is left of our primitive natures.

Its waters are full of hippopotami, which emerge like giant swine at night to feast on the fresh, green grass of the pastures near the river. I owe my first hippopotamus to this river. I was strolling about the top deck in my pyjamas one morning at dawn, when we suddenly rounded a corner and came upon one which had been feeding some five hundred yards inland. He took a great deal of killing, poor beast, but I got him eventually. His teeth were good, and like my first elephant, which proved to be the largest that I got during my stay in the country,

this proved to be my best and largest hippopotamus. I was rather pressed for time on this trip, so we hauled him bodily on board with the aid of the steam winch. Another scene of carnage, somewhat similar to that which attended the killing of my elephant, followed; but I insisted on the hide, which is much sought after for the making of whips and sticks, being all handed over to me. Then when the excitement had cooled, I distributed the major portion of it among the crew, according to rank. The rest I kept, in order to have it treated for my own use. It has one great disadvantage even when properly cured and made into sticks; it seems to be almost impossible to entirely eliminate the smell from it. It may appear to be all right, but as soon as the weather becomes damp, its presence will make itself distinctly evident to the olfactory nerves. It is curious, however, that I almost entirely lost the use of these nerves during the time that I was in the Sudan, and only regained it after a couple of months' residence in England. Even now when I return to a tropical climate I invariably notice that this sense weakens with every month that passes; always to return with the colder climate of the west. I look upon it as a blessing in disguise; for judging from the occasional odours which obtrude themselves upon me as it is, I should be very sorry to have a finer sense to meet them with. Egypt is, of course, much worse in this respect than the Sudan; indeed, the smell of the sudd on a dull and clammy day is the only one in connection with the latter



Photo by G. B. Middleton

HIPPOPOTAMUS





country which occurs to me objectionably as I write.

But I must leave the Bahr-el-Ghazal to the drowsy heat which marks its day, and to the beasts of prey which wake the stillnesses of its nights, and proceed to the most horrible place in the Sudan, the great region of the sudd.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE SUDD

THE Bahr-el-Ghazal, after running through Lake No, mixes its waters with Bahr-el-Gebel as it hurries on its way from the great lakes of Uganda to the sea. Its junction with the Bahr-el-Ghazal marks the end of its journey through the miles of swamp which are known by the name of "sudd." The river is deep and still, and its velocity at certain parts is great. The first time that I entered the sudd region I thought that it was, apart from the smell, in all ways beautiful.

One enters an endless avenue of papyrus, tall and slender and of a most perfect green ; it is fascinating at first, but when once the sameness of its unchanging appearance begins to be felt, it is distasteful ever afterwards. The stalk of the growth is absolutely bare and smooth ; the head is crowned with a flower which resembles an onion flower gone to seed, green, but at seasons tipped faintly with gold.

For three days and for three nights one passes through this description of scenery, always with the peculiar sickly smell of decaying vegetation in one's nostrils. It is the throne of desolation, even the animals avoid it. A cloak of silence falls upon the

place as you enter it, a silence which is broken only by the swish of the disturbed waters as they rush from the wheel of the steamer against the walls of papyrus, past which you are labouring. The hidden life which fills the air with sound in other districts of the Sudan is not to be found here; there are mosquitoes, it is true—and as emissaries of his Satanic Majesty it is a fitting abode for them—but there is scarcely any other life. Very occasionally the scared face of a hippopotamus, seemingly thoroughly ashamed of its surroundings and full of questionings as to how it got there, appears above the water; once I saw three elephants in the district.

I think of that time with shame. There was another man on board with me, and it was the first time that we had seen any of these animals in their native element. We therefore got our rifles, and, forgetting that it would be practically impossible to retrieve the tusks even if we killed, we fired. A shot, I hope it was not mine, evidently lodged in the leg of one of the animals, and it could only move with great difficulty. At the time when we fired it was walking a few yards behind the other two, and after the shot it gradually fell further and further behind, until the others noticed that there was something wrong. Both of them turned immediately, came back to where the wounded beast was struggling along, and, placing themselves on either side of him, supported him along out of the reach of danger. It was a sight which, in one way, I would not have missed for anything; but, on the other hand, I never regretted anything so



keenly as that I should have needed the lesson which was thus given to me.

I have probably wounded numerous animals which I have been unable to secure, since that day ; but I have never fired without thinking, and have never attempted a shot if there was not a reasonable chance of my being able to profit by it.

This sudd region has cost the Government thousands of pounds. In the old days an accumulation of the growth constantly barred the passage to navigation. Here it is a very different thing to what it is on the river which I have just described, as there was no hard bank to land on, and no game at hand to shoot. A boat badly stuck in the great sudd ran the grave risk of remaining there until starvation overtook her crew ; this difficulty was one of the first things that occupied the minds of the administration upon the coming of the English. The question was not only that of difficulties of navigation ; it also bore directly upon the prosperity of Egypt, since much water was lost in the swamps to the far south of the Sudan. The first sudd-cutting expedition left Omdurman, under the command of Peake Bey, very shortly after the fall of Omdurman ; but it was not until the year 1902 that the work could be said to be complete, and a clear channel assured to the country. Even now it must always remain a matter of some uncertainty as to whether the channel will remain open, for while the probabilities point to a steady and sure way through the miles of swamp, it is always possible that an accumulation may form at one of the corners of

the river, and the work all have to be done over again.

In one of his reports, Sir William Garstin proposed a drastic measure as the only one whereby absolute safety could be secured to the country in this respect. He proposed that the existing course of the Nile through the swamps of the Upper Sudan should be entirely diverted, and a new course excavated for it along the side of the hard land which lies to the east of the swamps. It would then empty into the Bahr-el-Zaraf, a river which is at present little used; the point at which it first leaves its parent, the White Nile, is entirely lost in sudd, and it is therefore a river which ends blindly, nowhere.

This new scheme would cost millions to carry through, and in view of the number of years that have passed since operations in the sudd district have been necessary, it is perhaps doubtful whether it will ever be undertaken. Each year lessens the probability of a block in the river which has already been cleared, unless an untoward circumstance should loosen the banks through which the water flows; in such a case the whole place would be blocked in a very short time, as the current would naturally lose much of its necessary force.

In Baker's time the river, though not actually impassable—for he managed at last to penetrate it and get through to Uganda—was navigable only under circumstances of the greatest difficulty; and in numerous places it was impossible to move without resorting to the methods of pulling and cutting which

are now only necessary in the less important rivers of the Sudan. There still remains one portion of the river which it is very difficult to navigate at low Nile, but this is due to the shallowness of the water and not to any accumulation of sudd or other vegetable matter. At this point (it is towards the southern end of the sudd) it would certainly pay the Government to deepen a permanent channel of sufficient width to enable boats to pass up and down without the present danger of sticking high and dry in the shallows. It would not be a very expensive undertaking; the ground is, for the most part, fairly soft, and the strength of the current of water flowing into it would probably be sufficient to keep it clear in the future.

Sir William Garstin's scheme certainly has the advantage of assuring a navigable waterway without the possibility of interruption between Gondokoro and Khartoum, with the one exception of the ford of Abu Zeit, and, as he suggested in his report on the subject, the material excavated might be utilised as the embankment for a railway, should it ever be thought necessary to construct one in these parts. This contingency is hardly probable. Africa will have to content herself with a Cape to Cairo line of transport by combined rail and steamer for many generations to come; it will not be practicable or indeed desirable to cover the whole distance by railway. With such a grand natural waterway as lies between Gondokoro and Khartoum, the enormous expenditure which the construction of a railway

would necessitate would be unjustifiable, and there is no prospect of its being undertaken, at least in our time. It is true that branches, running to different portions of the interior of the Sudan, may conceivably lessen the distance to be traversed by water, but through the sudd, for instance, a railway would be an impossibility; it would be necessary to carry it away to the east, joining the river again near Taufikier. Africa will have to increase the value and amount of her exports to an enormous extent before the expenditure of extra millions on a railway, which would connect Uganda with the capital of the Sudan, can be even thought of seriously.

The cutting of the sudd was one of the most arduous tasks which lay before the English on their arrival in the country. It was one which needed incessant attention and hard work, and it lay in a district which is absolutely devoid of attraction. At early dawn the Englishmen in charge would rise to see that all was in order for the day's work, and from that time through the day they were constantly busy superintending. I had not arrived in the country when the expedition under Major Peake made the first impression on this mighty swamp; but during the last, under Lieutenant Drury, R.N., and Mr. Poole, I had frequent opportunities of seeing the men at work, and I never saw it but what I thanked Providence that it had not fallen to my lot to be attached to the expedition.

The manner in which the work was accomplished was briefly this. A party of men would clamber out



as best they might on to the reeking swamp ; then, selecting a block of sudd, they would cut down through it with swords till it was practically free from the body of the surrounding swamp. A hawser was then passed out to them, and this they would fasten securely round the all but severed portion, and return to the boat. The ship's end of the hawser would in its turn be attached to the winch on board, and the ship would be driven astern with a jerk, thus bringing the mass of sudd which had been cut, away from the field. It would then be pushed aside into the stream, which carried it away till, water-logged, it sunk somewhere in the north. This accomplished, the same thing would take place again and again till time was called for food. Feeding-time over, the same routine would be carried out until dark. And then began the mosquitoes' parade !

During the last expedition, an anchor and other accessories of a steamer were found by the men, deeply bedded in the sudd. They had not been left by any of the steamers which had been engaged in the sudd since the battle of Omdurman ; it is probable, to judge from the state of the metal when it was found, that these relics were of a time preceding the rise of the Mahdi, and are therefore interesting records of some forgotten attempt to clear a water-way through these desolate regions.

The chief station of the sudd during the cutting operations was a place called Sanduk (the box), and after the dreary hours of the first part of my voyage up, I was looking forward with eagerness to



Photo by G. B. Middleton

SUDD CUTTING

TO THE  
ASSOCIATES

my arrival there. We reached it one evening just as the mosquitoes were beginning to wake, but I looked in vain for any vestige of a station. At length the *reis* pointed out a melancholy-looking box, on a rickety pole, and—this was Sanduk. It had been put there as a landmark by some sportsman who must have been leaving the district for ever, otherwise he could never have displayed such energy and playfulness. That it was a snare and a delusion to men I can affirm from dread experience. It contained, I believe, one bottle, reputed to be full of whisky ; but I never took the trouble to explore, one disappointment was quite sufficient.

Shambe, an island in a swamp in the times of rain, but in the dry season quite a presentable little station, stands near the southern limit of the sudd district. Any place where one could land would be acceptable after the awful swamp through which one has to pass in these districts. There is a large lake immediately in front of the village, the resting-place of a large number of hippopotami. It was, I believe, due to a shooting expedition here by moonlight, that I contracted the illness which sent me home to England in my first year. The hippopotami go ashore to feed at night, and the moon being just at its zenith, two other men and myself decided to try and get a shot at them. For several hours we wandered about, with the water often above our waists, and with no tangible result in the way of sport. When I returned to the boat I felt thoroughly chilled, but a stiff glass of whisky made me all right then. However, I was



not altogether fit for the rest of my trip, and about a fortnight later I developed dysentery. Unfortunately when it became severe I was out of the reach of an English medical man, and acting on the principle that if nature, unassisted by constant habit, craved for a thing, it could not be injurious, I indulged a newly born and irrepressible desire for pickles, Worcester sauce, and other indigestibles. In a moment of weakness I had parted with my cook to another man, to help him out of a difficulty, and was consequently at the mercy of a small boy, who did nothing that he was not obliged to, and then only with as bad a grace as possible. If I asked for eggs, they appeared hard boiled an hour later ; if I called for soda, it was brought to me boiling ; if I asked for tea, I could expect it when I had forgotten the order, cold. The consequence was that notwithstanding the kindness of two Englishmen who were on board for a great part of the journey, I arrived in Omdurman at last in a state of collapse. I spent about a month at a friend's house, during which time I had the enormous satisfaction of hearing that my late servant had been sent to gaol for stealing bottles from the house where I was a guest.

On the morning after my arrival, I woke to find a new boy at my side with milk. He did not offer any explanations, and at the time I scarcely noticed more than that I was not troubled with the presence of the little scoundrel who had been my sole attendant on the journey south. This new boy, Mohammed, proved to be one of the finest servants I have ever

seen, black or white. He was a member of the Jaalin tribe, the one tribe which remained faithful to the British in the time of the Mahdi. He had been picked up on the beach of Omdurman by a British naval officer at the time of the expedition, and I never ceased to be grateful to this man—he is dead now, poor fellow—for the manner in which he had trained the boy. He was quite a good cook, even when he came to me at the age of fifteen; in later days he attained fame as a chef; and he was absolutely faithful and honest. The very first day that he came to me I opened a portmanteau to take a paper out of it, and forgot to lock it when I handed it back to him. Almost a month later I remembered that I had nearly thirty pounds—a great part of it in silver—in the bag. I opened it again with some misgivings, but found the sum intact, even to milliems. During the whole of my first illness he was untiring in his attentions, and on every subsequent occasion when I was ill he acted with the same solicitude. I remember two incidents particularly well. One was when I was in the awful Civil hospital of Khartoum a year or so before I left the country. Half my nights were spent in delirium, though I could recall almost every word which I had spoken in the mornings. Frequently I called this long-suffering servant from his rest to give impossible orders; I would tell him to go out into the town and bring me a cup of tea; I would tell him to put my luggage in a railway carriage, and give him other orders of a similarly impossible nature. He would listen attentively and depart, to

return in a few moments to tell me that he had done what I had told him, or that the shop had been shut ; he was always patient and humoured my slightest wish. There are few European servants who would have acted in the same manner under like circumstances.

Again, at a still later date, when I was suffering from the presence of a malarial microbe in the joint of my knee, the same thing happened. During the first night, when the pain was at its worst, and before the doctors had started administering morphia, I called him dozens of times ; he came each time as cheerfully as the first. The next night he came into my cabin just before he went to bed and attached a cord to the head of my bed. " The other end of this is tied to my pillow," he said ; " I am very sleepy and I am afraid that I may not hear you call, but if I do not, pull this, and it will wake me."

When I left the country I gave him as large a *backsheesh* as I was able to, and I only regret that I could not have doubled it. He stayed with me until a few months after I left the Sudan, when he said that it was quite impossible for him to remain in a country like Egypt, where the women took no part in any festivities which might be going, and he returned to his own land.

After a month I was sent to hospital, which was, by the way, the quarters of the Khalifa's harem in the old days. There I remained for nearly a month more, and finally I was removed to Cairo. I was sent up in the charge of a Syrian doctor, and I re-

member my satisfaction when, one night during the journey, I was able to persuade my boy to hunt up a tin of Maconochie's rations, which I devoured cold in the fear that I should be discovered and baulked of my meal if I waited to have them cooked. Curiously enough, I don't think that they did me much harm. Truly I was starving ; milk and soda may be good for one, but it is hardly satisfying. After a fortnight in Cairo I was sent home ; I put Mohammed in charge of a European chef at one of the hotels, and left the country on the same day that I received my instructions. I arrived in England after a satisfying journey, just before Christmas, then I was promptly put back to my milk diet again !



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE UPPER NILE AND BELGIAN CONGO

ON my return to the Sudan, three months later, the chief thing that I can remember is the appalling desire for sleep which beset me at any and every moment of the day, when I was not actually engaged in physical exercise. If I sat down to read I would fall asleep before I had read a page, and on two or three occasions I went to sleep over my meals. It was terribly trying, but I suppose it was necessary for my constitution at the time ; at all events it gradually got better, and I lost it entirely about six or eight months after my return.

After remaining in the Khartoum district for some time, I went south to Mongalla, the southern frontier station of the Sudan, where a gunboat was always kept at the disposal of the resident British inspector. The gunboat on which I lived was one of the most unsteady of her kind, but she belonged to a useful class, one that could go up any of the smallest rivers, and she carried three guns, two maxims and a 12-pounder. The station Mongalla, and the adjacent district, were at that time under the command of Captain Borton, who has since retired from the army, and is now Postmaster-

General in Egypt. My duties lay in cruising about to the various stations which he had to inspect, and also the presence of the boat gave an added appearance of authority to our frontier station which lay between the two Congo stations of Kiro and Lado. It was exceedingly nice work, and notwithstanding the fact that walking from one side to the other was almost enough to give my boat a list, I spent one of the best times that I had in the Sudan on this duty. There was good shooting to be had in the district which came under Borton's control, and there was a certain amount of game within a walk of our head-quarters at Mongalla.

But of all the things that I remember most clearly in connection with this district, was the coming of a storm one beautiful afternoon when I was out shooting. It was truly wonderful; everything was calm and still, when suddenly I became conscious of a dim sound as of rushing water in the distance. I could not see anything, however, so I imagined that it must be the noise of the breeze in the trees some distance off. A few moments later I reached the summit of a small hill, and from there, away to the east, I saw an advancing sheet of shimmering white, some three or four hundred yards in width. Even then I could not for a moment imagine what it was, but at length the truth dawned on me. It was rain. It came swiftly and regularly towards me, the sound of its falling growing louder each second. Seeing at last that it was really only a "slice" of water, and that without the sphere of its width

there was apparently no rain falling, I tried to avoid it; but I started just too late. One moment I was standing in the sunshine of a tropical afternoon, the next I was absolutely drenched to the skin; yet another moment and only the wet underfoot remained as evidence that the thing had happened. I walked on perhaps a dozen yards and the ground was cork dry; not a drop of moisture had touched it. I found later, when I returned to the village, that the storm had caught one half of Mongalla; the guardship, the *Melik*, had not a dry corner in her, while my own boat, the *Abu Klea*, had been untouched. I never saw more heavy rain in the Sudan, and I think that its extreme local nature was very exceptional. This happened after I had been some months in the station, and it marked the beginning of the rains. When they had once started you were never safe; it would be cloudless one minute and pouring with rain the next. I never stayed in for it if I wanted to go out, as a matter of fact I rather liked shooting in the rain, it reminded me of England; and I had a theory that if one had a hot bath immediately it would counteract the evil effects of a chill. I did not suffer from fever then as much as the men who were careful to avoid getting wet; but whether the after-effects of rheumatism, which have bothered me, were due to my previous defiance of the elements is more than I can say. In Khartoum a rainy day upsets everything; no one works and no one is expected to do so, but in that district rain falls so seldom that it

is a very different matter from the southern region, where the rains occupy the major portion of the year.

The natives of the Mongalla district are of the Behri tribe, lank and lazy, yet like the rest of the native population of the Sudan they have great possibilities in them if we could rid them of the conservatism which has decreed that it is unmanly to labour. The heroes of the grass-cutting incident, which I have already related, were members of this tribe. They live largely upon fish which they lance in the water, but it is a sport which requires an infinite amount of skill, and even most practised spearmen frequently return empty-handed. Certainly they have not the appearance of being over-nourished; they are exceedingly thin, and are physically the weakest tribe of the Sudan. They also lack the keenness of either the Dinka or Shillouk tribes; they do not appear to take a real interest in anything, but are quite contented to spin out their existence at the doors of their miserable mud or straw huts, as long as they can procure sufficient food to keep life in their bodies. Their women are for the most part miserable and ill-nourished in appearance, and I think that a great deal of the lassitude of the tribe is due to the fact that, year in and year out, they pass their nights under the ban of the dread mosquitoes. Some people are under the impression that mosquitoes do not trouble the black; this is an entire fallacy, they appear to be every whit as sensitive to the sting as the white men. I have watched the unfortunate people at



night-time squatting round the small fire they have built in the vain attempt to ward off the insects. My boat has lain close in to some of their huts at night, and unceasingly through the long hours they have flapped away at the swarms which surround them ; between sunset and sunrise there was never peace in the camp—it was war the whole night through. Undisturbed sleep was an impossibility ; they were not possessed of sufficient clothing to cover their bodies as the more civilised Sudanese further north, and they were therefore at the entire mercy of the fever-laden insects. Who, therefore, can wonder that in the morning they are only too ready to seek the shade of their huts and drowse away the time, obtaining then the sleep that nature demands, and which has been denied to them in the hours during which it should legitimately have been theirs. I am convinced that you have only to supply these people with good mosquito curtains in order to make new men of them ; in any case, the experiment would be worth making.

There are huge herds of elephants in this part of the Sudan. On one occasion information was brought to the ship that there were elephants in the neighbourhood. At that time I had not got the second elephant which I was allowed under the regulations ; neither had another man who was on board at the time, Captain Carey, so we went out together, a mistaken thing to do, for one man is almost certain to spoil the other's sport. We had not gone very far before the well-known rumbling sound

THE  
CATHOLIC

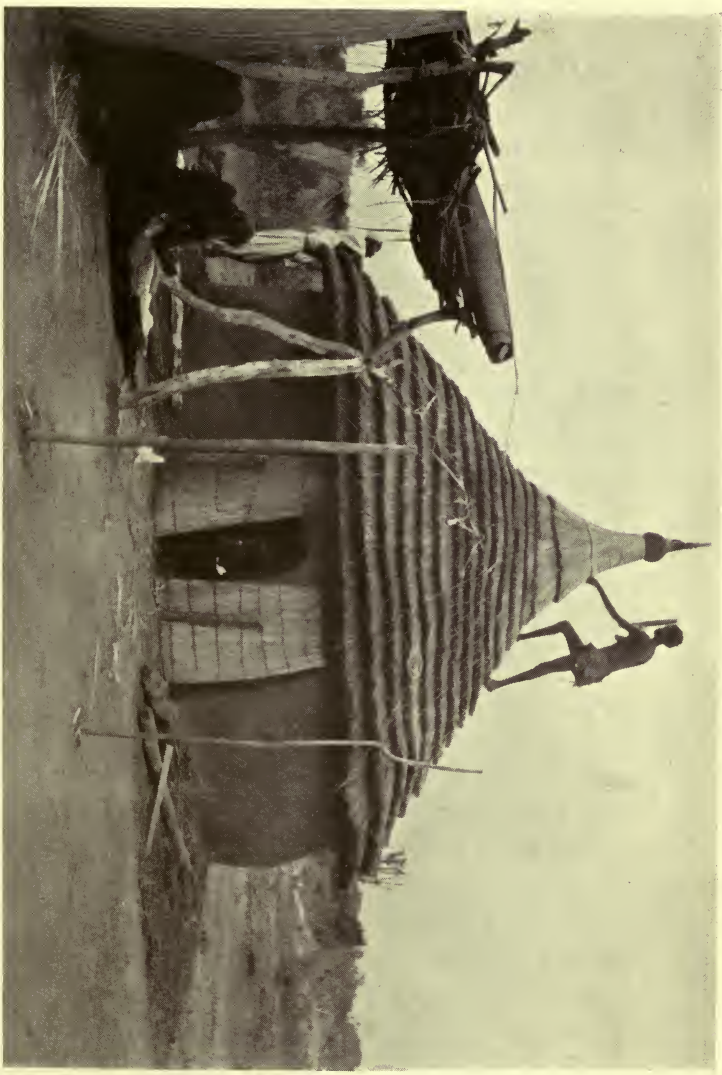


Photo. by G. B. Middleton

LADY THATCHING HER RESIDENCE

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of the animals' stomachs in the near distance told us that we were in close proximity to them, and in another minute we caught a glimpse of a huge form about a hundred yards ahead. There was scarcely any breeze ; this is always a disadvantage, as without it is impossible to keep to leeward of the animals. They are as blind as bats, but they can scent a human being for miles, and once they have done this your chances of a shot are practically *nil*, unless, indeed, you happen to be scented by an old rogue elephant, one that has been turned out of the herd by the younger bulls, or by a cow elephant with her young. In either of these cases you stand the risk of taking a flying shot at the beast as you are being charged—a privilege which is not always acceptable, especially as an elephant is practically invulnerable from the front.

We worked round gradually, smoking cigarettes and choosing our direction by the line of the smoke till we thought we were in a fairly good position to advance and shoot. At that moment, however, there was a rumble just behind us, and we lay in waiting. A young bull elephant passed us within about thirty yards, moving slowly along, picking choice morsels off the trees as he passed. We waited until the coast was clear, and then moved on again towards the large tusker we had set our hearts upon. When we got up to him, he was standing with three others, at about forty or fifty yards' range. The ground was very bad, and we decided to try and get round a little further still ; fifty yards is really too long a range



to shoot these animals at, especially as we only had ·303 calibre rifles. It was well that we did so. We walked on cautiously, and rounding a clump of trees, came unexpectedly upon a young bull, moving in a cross direction to the one which we were pursuing. We both stood absolutely still in the hope that we might not be seen. The animals are, as I have already said, very short-sighted, and the best thing to do under such circumstances is to stand immovable. The chances are that you will not be discovered. I suppose we were too close; he must have caught a glimpse of our moving bodies, or a breath of air warned him of our approach. He stopped dead and faced us, and a mutual-admiration *séance* lasted for perhaps half a minute. Before he took action we were about twelve or fifteen yards from him; but suddenly he raised his trunk into the air, stuck out his great ears at right angles to his body, and advanced to investigate more closely. I am not sure what Carey did, I could not see; but when I stopped I found that the animal had probably had as great a fright as I had myself, because he was disappearing with much speed in the opposite direction. It had frightened the rest of the herd too, apparently, for we did not see any others for some time. As we were returning to the boat we came upon them unexpectedly on the ground that we had covered while stalking in the first place. We got on to an ant-heap to take our bearings, and from this point saw a truly wonderful sight.

The surrounding country was literally alive with

elephant, including several cows with young. I was thankful then that we had not followed our original intention of firing when we had the fifty-yard chance at the first bull, for had we done so, the whole herd, alarmed at the shot, would have stampeded, and as we were pretty well surrounded, it is more than probable that one of the cows would have chanced in our direction. Had this been the case, the end would not have been pleasant, for the lack of a sufficiently pronounced breeze made it impossible to know where to turn without careful observation. After watching the herd browsing for a considerable time, we continued to try for another and better shot, but dusk fell before an opportunity presented itself, and we were eventually forced to give it up for the night. But the afternoon's experience was a remarkable one, and I would not have missed it for anything; it is seldom, even in these regions, that one chances across a herd as large as this, and more seldom still that one sees the baby elephant being trained to pick the young green shoots off the trees with its trunk, as we did on this occasion.

Captain Carey got a fine bull a few weeks later, but it was some time before I had another opportunity of shooting one.

The Belgian stations certainly are much more picturesque in their appearance than our own, but this is owing to the custom of the Belgian authorities of making a small clearing, and building all the residences close together, instead of spreading them out, as is usual in our stations. Kiro, the most

northern station of the Congo on the Nile, is very pretty and clean; Lado, the second station, is prettier still. Even if there were no flags or Europeans visible, no one could, by any stretch of imagination, think that they were British, their whole appearance is so absolutely foreign. There are some very nice buildings in these stations, some of them are roofed with corrugated iron, some are neatly thatched with straw; but though the scenic effect is charming, they are all much too close together for comfort. Thriving fruit trees abound in the vicinity of the stations, papaw and banana being the principal fruits grown.

The natives here are absolutely different to the tribes on the opposite bank of the Nile; they are short and thick set; the women are, for the most part, quite as tall, if not taller than the men. Some of them are beautifully proportioned, but they have not such refined faces as some of the more savage tribes of the Sudan. The women shave their hair, with the exception of a small tuft which is left at the very top of the head. The effect is not as unpleasing as one would imagine; it seems so typical of them, one is familiar with it the moment one sees it. They are not a moral race; indeed, they are decidedly inclined in the opposite direction; the standard of morality is low, lower than that of the British stations in the Sudan. All women, even the wives and daughters of non-commissioned officers of the Congolese army, appear to hold no tie sacred, or to regard free love with anything but favour. The men are

entirely indifferent as to what their women-folk do, and will deliberately connive at wrongdoing, provided that their consciences receive sufficient pecuniary satisfaction.

All, or very nearly all, of the European officers in the stations keep women, and their relations with them are very different to that of the Englishman with his Sudanese wife further north. In the Congo, the relationship which exists is an openly avowed one, and I have known officers invited by the British officer in command of Mongalla, to visit the town in state and take their wives with them; the latter accompanying them in all their visits about the station. It is the custom in these stations also to extend hospitality in this direction. Most of the women appear to be without any pretensions of modesty, and though in the villages they are, if anything, more fully clothed than the Sudanese women, they will bathe openly in public places with an entire disregard as to the nudity of their condition. It may be that the lack of religion in all form has something to do with this trait in their characters, for though some of the natives of these districts profess Mohammedanism, the majority of the race are, I believe, nullifidian, and do not possess even the pagan forms of faith which obtain among the savages of the Sudan properly.

In the latter country, women who are clothed at all are careful to retain their modesty in public, though they are anything but a modest race; the tribes which are unclothed are modest in their entire innocence and lack of self-consciousness.



As in the Sudan, marriages between the natives here are contracted at a very early age, the boy is usually about fifteen years old, and the girl nine or ten. Wives are comparatively cheap, a good deal cheaper than they are further north ; but then the demand is not so great, and in the less populous districts it is always cheaper to accomplish matrimony than it is in the large towns, or in crowded agricultural districts. It is, however, curious that in the Fashoda district there is a fixed price for a wife—four cows—and a boy has to be really wealthy before he can afford this. In those districts I believe that the proportion of males and females is almost equal, and this perhaps explains the comparatively high charges.

Though the Congo Free State is Belgian, I only met one Belgian officer during my residence in the district ; they are nearly all Italian ; men who have for some reason or another left their own army and sought military glory in other lands. Every white man in the station takes his food at the same mess, and I am more than ever convinced that this is, in the long run, a mistake. Distinctions of class are not so marked here as in the British Army ; the non-commissioned officers frequently struck me as being quite on a grade with their superiors ; but nevertheless the system of equality leads to endless trouble at times, especially when visitors are present. These troubles are, of course, not openly evident to the visitor, but I have been told by both commissioned and non-commissioned officers that the arrangement

of the seats frequently leads to violent incriminations among the lower members of the mess, when they consider that a visitor should have had his position at table altered by one place or some equally petty thing of this kind. The Belgian Government allows its messes a liberal entertaining allowance, and I never found them backward in their hospitality ; one had only to put in an appearance in the district, and an immediate invitation to dine would be dispatched to you. Personally, I used to rather dread these entertainments, though politeness forbade a refusal, for it meant absorbing a huge amount of impossibly sweet champagne ; and as I spoke very little French and no Italian, and my hosts spoke no other languages, it was rather hard to sustain an animated conversation all the time. They were without exception on the most friendly terms with all the Englishmen in the district when I first arrived ; but a cloud fell on our relations, even before the sudden occupation of an outpost in the Bahr-el-Ghazal by an officer of the Congo put us within a measurable distance of war.

The incident which led up to our strained relations was this. Neither of the three stations of the Congo territory on the Nile had a resident doctor ; in cases of illness they used to send down to us, and we would allow the resident medical officer at Mongalla, a Syrian, to attend their patient. It happened on one occasion that one of the British officers stationed at Mongalla was seriously ill with fever ; his temperature rose to an alarming height even for the Sudan,

where high temperatures are common on the least provocation, and the doctor was somewhat alarmed at his condition. One evening towards sunset, when there was still room for considerable anxiety, an officer of the Congo came down from Lado to take the doctor back with him to see a non-commissioned man there who was seriously ill. Captain Borton, who as I have said was in command of the station, explained the case, and pointed out that much as he regretted having to refuse, he could not send the doctor out of the station while one of our own officers was in danger. The emissary from the Congo appeared to be somewhat annoyed; this was perhaps to be accounted for by the fact that he had had a long and tiring journey in the sun for nothing, and that he was disappointed at not being able to convey the desired assistance to his man at Lado. However, there was nothing more to be said; the thing was an impossibility, and that was an end of the matter. A few days later Borton had occasion to go up to Gondokoro, and consequently we had to pass the Lado station. According to our universal custom we put in there for a few minutes to exchange compliments, but much to our astonishment only one officer turned out to meet the boat. Finally, as an afterthought, one or two other officers came out, but the commandant of the station never put in an appearance at all. It was a deliberate affront to the British flag, and the officer already alluded to—a Belgian—who, by the way, was a charming man, felt it acutely. He confided to Borton that his

confrères had been annoyed at his refusal to allow the doctor to attend the sick man, who had, poor fellow, since succumbed. It was sad, but his death had nothing at all to do with the question; an officer's duty lies in the first place with his own men, and it would have been a gross act of unfairness had our doctor been allowed to leave the station under the circumstances. Borton said little, but he did not stay long; and when two days afterwards we returned, our friends, having had sufficient time to think over the disgracefulness of their behaviour, assembled in force on the bank to greet us; we went past at full steam. We dipped our flag to the one which flew over the commandant's quarters; and Borton waved cheerily from the main deck; but that was the extent of his cordiality. Several days passed, and again we had occasion to visit Gondokoro. This time again we ran no risks, but passed the waiting officers, under full steam, both going up stream and coming down. The following day Borton had a message from the commandant of Lado, asking why he had not paid his customary visit to that station. Borton, following the example of Bismarck when annoyed, answered in his own language, which, of course, was incomprehensible to the receiver. To make a long story short, the end of the affair was that Captain Borton received a full and definite apology in writing for the unwarrantable treatment to which he had been subjected, and the matter dropped.

But, as a general rule, the officers at these places were hospitality itself. The cosmopolitan stations



would be full of pomp and display when we were expected ; the boat would be met by all the officers in full uniform, and an escort of military musicians would lead the way to head-quarters. There one would sit down to an excellent and lavish meal, but it would be served on a tablecloth which had evidently never been washed since its early youth. It was the same in everything ; if the reception was imposing and the food good, the small details of the feast were invariably wretched and tawdry.

Regaf lies some thirty miles to the south of Gondokoro, and was my furthest point south. I recollect my first visit to this station well, for after three hours of the most strenuous endeavours to get past the shallows of Gondokoro, during which time I despaired of ever reaching Regaf at all, one of my men calmly informed me that we were attempting the wrong channel. This proved to be true, and we passed up the other one with comparative ease, but I seldom had a more nerve-shattering experience than that of following its upper reaches. It twisted about among rocks and shoals, and at every corner it seemed as though the *Abu Klea*, with her rudder hard over to avoid smashing into the rocks, must turn turtle. We reached there at last, and found a band on the foreshore waiting to welcome us. I did not go ashore at once but watched the procession from the deck, which was much more amusing. The officers were all in full uniform, with swords ; Borton was in white mufti ; the soldiers were, of course, in full uniform, and behind the procession marched two

of my stokers, black from the stokehold, and the ship's goat! I am not writing this to ridicule our hosts, who were kindness itself, and who only got into full-dress kit as a mark of honour to Captain Borton; but nobody who had a bird's-eye view of that mixed procession proceeding to the Commandant's quarters could have helped being amused.

That night there was to be a *fantasia* for our special benefit, and it was on this occasion that I saw for the first and only time the famous "stomach dance" of the Congolese. They kept this particular dance until the end of the evening; the first part consisted of ordinary dances similar to those I had constantly seen in the Sudan; but at length they came to the part they loved, and if some of the performers were not in pain by the time that it was over, they are truly a most wonderful people. A man and a woman stand up together for the dance, and move for some time round one another. They are naked except for a loin cloth, and their movements are graceful and free. Suddenly, when they are two or three yards apart, they stop and face one another, and then as suddenly they come together, their stomachs meeting with a report like that of a pistol-shot. They do this time after time with apparent enjoyment, and the dance, curiously enough, is not at all vulgar. Immediately after meeting they spring apart, indulge in a little indiscriminate dancing, and then repeat the performance. It was certainly the most popular feature of the evening, and was especially appreciated by my crew, to whom, for the most part, it was a

novelty. It was very amusing, and I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to this station, everyone was in such good spirits.

In the afternoon I had succeeded in evading the kindly proffered attentions of one of the officers of the station—we could neither of us talk the other's language—and had strolled out to explore the country by myself. It is very attractive country ; to the south the hills of Uganda can be seen, and the whole vicinity of the station is well wooded and green. The famous mushroom stone mentioned by Sir Samuel Baker in his book "Ismailia," is quite close to the station, and in writing of it he certainly did not exaggerate its curious properties. Its "stalk" is composed of a perpendicular boulder, about four feet in diameter as far as I can remember. On the top of this is poised a gigantic slab of granite—I cannot remember its actual dimensions and I should be afraid to hazard a guess, but it is safe to say that it is colossal. It is not known how many years it has been in its present state, but I often wonder that the Sudan Government does not run launches to this station from Gondokoro for the benefit of the tourists during the season, in order to enable them to see it. It is one of the natural wonders of the world.

The following morning I went up to the top of Mount Regaf, the sentinel which guards the entrance to the navigable Nile. It was a hot and tiring climb, but it is one which is very well worth the expenditure of energy it entails. The mountain is clothed with verdure on every side, and nestling among the crevices



THE NILE LOOKING SOUTH FROM THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT REGAF





of its rocks I found the only maidenhair fern which I saw in the country. The view from its summit is magnificent; the Nile is not navigable to the south of this point; but its broken waters are visible for many miles, till they are eventually lost among the distant hills. I spent the whole morning gazing at the panorama from different points, or in wandering about on the steep sides of this mountain; it is a day which stands out in my memory as one of the best I spent in Africa. Everything was so entirely unexpected and new. I was constantly discovering small reminders of England in slabs of moss-covered rock, flowers, ferns, and so on, and England has always been to me the most beautiful country on earth.

On my return I found that the shooting-party consisting of Captain Borton and several Congolese officers and men, which had left the station in the early morning, had returned triumphant with two hinds of the water-buck genus, and one young buck, scarcely yet weaned from its mother. Captain Borton, in whose honour the shooting-party had been held, had disgraced himself; he had shot nothing. It appears that the party after wandering about *en masse* for some time had seen a herd of game at last, but unfortunately they were all does. Borton, as guest, was politely offered first shot, which, however, he naturally refused, as there was not a buck in the herd, and they were not shooting for food. Eventually the commandant of the station showed his prowess with the rifle and brought down a large doe, and the soldiers who had accompanied them actually fired

a volley into the retreating herd and killed two more. The officers accepted the explanation which Borton gave them, but it was evidently incomprehensible to them ; and I believe that to this day they think that he refused to shoot because he was afraid of missing, and so disgracing himself before them all.

The officers of these stations very seldom shoot at all. When they are in want of meat they dispatch an army into the forests ; surround a herd and slaughter it ; it is quite simple. The extraordinary thing is that there still remains any game to be shot ; at the present rate of destruction it cannot last much longer. Elephants are being destroyed in the same way for their tusks ; sport does not enter the philosophy of the officers and civil authorities of the Congo.

I was quite sorry when we had to leave Regaf ; it was different to anything I had seen in the Sudan before. I liked the men and the garrison ; both were clean, and better ordered than those of the other stations of the same Government further north. The short journey back to Gondokoro on the bosom of a river, running for the greater part of its way through shoals of murderous-looking rocks at the rate of thirty miles an hour, was not one to be forgotten. However, swaying from side to side, we accomplished it at last, and spent the next two days at Gondokoro. Here again the difference from the Egyptian Sudan is very marked ; to begin with, the soldiers, short and sturdy as the men of the Congo, wear the forage cap of the British army as it was before German fever attacked the War Office authori-

ties and made them alter it, and it was curious to see this cap in place of the tarboosh, the universal head-gear of Egypt and the Egyptian Sudan. Then as you pass the outposts at night you are greeted with a "*Who goes there?*" in the tongue you have sometimes longed to hear with an intensity it is impossible to describe. No one who has not known what it is to hunger for the sound of an English sentence in place of the eternal Arabic, can realise the feelings which arise at the sound of such a call, suddenly and unexpectedly breaking the stillness of an African night.

Sometimes when I had been alone for any great length of time, the sound of the guttural Arabic always in my ears got on my nerves terribly, and I started to teach my boy English. We would work at it hard for about three days, then both of us becoming bored, we would allow the subject to drop. It is extraordinary how much of the English language the native servants manage to pick up from hearing their masters talk while they are waiting at table; but unfortunately for the reputation of most Englishmen it usually happens that the greater part of the vocabulary in their servants' possession is thickly and bountifully interspersed with adjectives—never of a printable description.

Gondokoro is a place that I never really liked. It is open and bare. To the south there is certainly some fine scenery, and in the dry season it may be quite a nice place to live in, but it is a spot to be avoided in the rains, when the surrounding districts



are swampy and unhealthy. There was a large staff of seven Englishmen there when I first visited the station, but since then, I am told, the number has been reduced to one. I often wonder what he does with himself during the long months which he spends there alone ; when there is not even shooting to fill up his spare time. In the winter season he has fair tourists to entertain, now that they arrive with Cook's circular tickets from Khartoum, but their visits are very transitory, and probably have the effect of accentuating his loneliness.

The houses here are built on pillars well above the level of the ground ; the wet season consequently loses half of its terrors, since one is always certain of dry foundations. This style of house is worthy of being copied throughout the Sudan, but unfortunately, though the principle is so good, the houses here are far from being well built ; indeed, a great number of them are really unsafe, and some of them have already fallen as witness to the fact. In my opinion the roofing of houses with corrugated iron is a very great mistake in a tropical climate, as they retain the heat in the summer, and the damp in the rainy season. They certainly have the advantage of cleanliness, and they offer no refuge to the insects which are the pest of every hot country, but that is about all that can be said of them.

The first man whom I met at Gondokoro turned out to be a great friend of some cousins of mine in England ; they had been the last people with whom he had dined at home prior to joining the Uganda

Rifles. The more you travel the more apparent becomes the smallness of the world.

The soil at Mongalla is excellent, and we succeeded in growing fine crops of potatoes, which had hitherto been supposed to be unsuited to the Sudan. In addition we had all the other vegetables common to the country, as well as papaw and a few bananas.

A great deal of smuggling in ivory was going on in the Mongalla district when I first went up there. It was known to exist, but the Government officials had failed to ascertain who was the moving spirit in the fraud. The sheikh of a village about twenty miles from Mongalla was suspected ; but nothing could be brought home to him, and the thing remained a mystery. One afternoon we were quietly steaming up the river towards Mongalla after a visit to Bor further north, when, on turning a corner, we espied a dug-out doing its best to efface itself in the grass at the side of the river. The actions of its crew were suspicious, so we stopped to investigate. The boat was heavily loaded with a fine cargo of new ivory, and subsequent questioning of the two unfortunate natives who were in charge of it, revealed the fact that it was the property of a woman by whom the whole system of smuggling was run. She was formerly of the northern Sudan, and was therefore, comparatively speaking, educated, but even then the scheme showed remarkable enterprise and organisation for a Moslem woman. She had apparently run the whole thing for years, reaping the greater part of the profits herself, the ignorant natives under her orders running

all the risks and getting but a moiety. We put the dug-out in a safe position on the bank, and with its crew as captives proceeded to the village where the enterprising lady had her head-quarters. We met her hurrying down to the boat to pay her respects to the Bey, quite oblivious of the fate which awaited her. She was made a prisoner, and tried at Mongalla ; her guilt was established without a shadow of a doubt, and eventually she was deported to Suez to spend a term of servitude. She was a cheery old soul, and I thoroughly admired her, she so absolutely gloried in her crime. The ivory trade, it should be remarked, is a monopoly in the hands of the Government ; but a famous Greek trader, Angelo Capato, once succeeded in getting permission to trade for it in the Bor district for a few months. He sent up sixty cattle, one of which jumped overboard on its journey south and was drowned ; but he cleared £1500 on the ivory that he secured with the rest, which was a pretty good percentage on his original outlay.

I killed three elephants at Bor, the capital of the mosquito world. One afternoon a man came in to say that there were elephants in the district, and I went out at once, as I was still allowed to shoot one more elephant on my license. After a very long time I succeeded in getting close enough to fire, but I foolishly attempted the brain shot, with the result that I only succeeded in wounding the beast. He went off at a tremendous pace at once, and I followed his spoor for at least a couple of miles before I caught sight of him again. I could not get close, so I tried a

shot at about sixty yards, but I failed to kill, and off he went again, while I followed pretty wearily in his wake. At last, the sun having almost set, I decided to leave him, and send a man out on the following morning to pick up the spoor, and report if he was badly wounded. I had not the least anxiety about getting back to the boat, for I had purposely taken two natives of the village out with me. They could understand a little spoken Arabic, but could only manage to put two or three words together themselves. At length I made them understand that I wished to return, and to my surprise, when they collected their vocabulary sufficiently to reply to my demand to be led to the steamer, they said, "*arif mafeesh*," which meant that they did not know the way. As I was perfectly certain that I did not, I began to regret my expedition. It is not a pleasing prospect to be lost in a place like this. At nine o'clock we were still walking aimlessly, when one of my companions, a boy of about fourteen, suddenly stopped, and felt the ground with his hand. He then held a long palaver with his companion, the purport of which, I gathered, was that he had discovered a path or a landmark which he recognised, and after some discussion we started off almost at the double. The track we had discovered was scarcely deserving of the name; it led us through long grasses and tangled undergrowth, but I was too pleased at the chance of reaching the river to be critical. At length I heard the welcome sound of hard, beaten ground beneath my feet, and a few moments



later I saw the silhouette of a *tuckel* (hut) against the sky. We were greeted with demonstrations of affection by its inhabitants. I suppose it was the usual native hospitality, extended to any strangers, for it was a village that we had never touched at before. One old lady—she must have been ninety at least—embraced me fervently, and then offered me water, which was far more to be appreciated under the circumstances. I could feel the mud of it as it went down my throat; but I was too thirsty to be particular, and I finished all that I could get. Our hosts did not want us to leave at all that night, but after a stay of nearly half an hour, we started to walk in the direction of the boat. It proved to be a very long way, and took us a good hour's fast walking.

We had one exciting moment on the way. My guides were walking about five yards ahead of me; it was intensely dark, but I could just see them. Suddenly they disappeared; one moment they were there before my eyes, the next they had vanished into thin air. I hastened on, thinking that perhaps they were tired and were trying to escape having to accompany me all the way back to the boat; but at almost the first step I went headlong over one of them who was lying face downward on the ground, silent as death. I uttered an ejaculation as I fell; he raised himself slightly, and motioned me to be quiet. I therefore lay quite still where I had fallen, and in another minute the reason for all this mystery was plain. I heard heavy breathing not ten yards from where I lay, and saw the outline of a rhinoceros

going slowly up from the river. It looked mountainous against the gleam of the water, but it evidently had not scented us, for it lumbered slowly up the bank and disappeared into the forest. The rhinoceros is about the only animal that will invariably charge on sight, so it was as well that we were not discovered, for in that darkness it would have been impossible to shoot with any degree of accuracy, and, not knowing the land, it would also have been extremely difficult to dodge.

The way seemed so long that I was beginning to think that we must be going in the wrong direction, and that we were moving away from the boat instead of towards it; but at last we heard one of the ship's guns, and in another ten minutes we were on board again. I found a search party on the point of leaving the boat; and it turned out that they had been firing the cannon at intervals for some hours, although we only heard it when we were not a quarter of a mile away. Even now I can remember the taste of the whisky and soda that I drank as I sat waiting for my bath to be prepared.

The following morning I sent men out as I had intended, but whether they did not go far enough, or whether they went in the wrong direction, I do not know. In any case, they returned with the news that no trace of the elephant which I had wounded the day before was to be found. I therefore took advantage of another chance which offered the same afternoon. Elephant were again reported in the neighbourhood, and I went out. Captain Borton

came with me to watch the sport, though, as he had killed his second elephant a few days before, by moonlight, he could not shoot. The regulations of that year allowed each man only two elephants. It was a brutal day ; there was no breeze to speak of, and it was very difficult to work round always to the lee side. When at last I did get a chance, I mulled it by shooting with my sight up to the two hundred yards, the bullet consequently going yards above the animal's back and only having the effect of scaring him away. We walked for miles, and I was on the point of giving up hope, when, mounting an ant-hill to take a last look round, I saw one of the bulls we had been stalking, calmly strolling along in front of me not a hundred yards away. I worked cautiously round to get a broadside shot, and took up my position behind some dwarf palms, which he must pass if he continued the direction he was then taking. He came as close as I could desire, and was not more than ten yards away when he stopped and gave me my chance. I had time to take steady aim at his heart, and fired. He went down on his knees to the shot, and I was sure of him. But as I advanced from one direction, his companion, with ears spread and trunk waving, crashed in from the other side of the clearing, and for a moment things looked as though they were going to be lively. However, one shot discharged with the intention of turning him had the desired effect, and he disappeared into the surrounding forest. The one I killed proved to be quite a fine tusker, though not nearly so big

as the one I first shot in the Bahr-el-Ghazal. We had the tusks cut out, and the natives of the surrounding district, scenting the blood like birds of prey, swooped down almost as soon as the beast was dead to appropriate this unaccustomed and welcome addition to their ordinary menu. We were leaving Bor for a few days, so I left the tusks to be cleaned and dried, and gave instructions for the preservation of the feet, which if properly cured make very good trophies. Incidentally, these of mine were *not* properly cured ; so my longsuffering family assured me some months later.

On my return to the station, after an absence of some days, jubilant natives came with news, which, considering the severity of the game laws, was less welcome to me than they had anticipated. They had discovered two dead elephants, in addition to the one from which I had taken the tusks before I left. The one I had wounded and left as only slightly hurt on the night I had been lost, had been found dead, and the second one, which had charged into the clearing, and which I had fired at only to turn, had avenged himself by dying, about a mile away. It was a most unfortunate affair, but I had to make the best of it, and I wrote a lengthy report on the subject, which was duly forwarded to the Governor-General. I was not fined, but the Government confiscated two pairs of the tusks. I suppose I should be grateful for the mercy of not being fined ; but on thinking of the laxity of the law as applied to some of the high officials of the Government, and as



Captain Borton had very kindly written a report on the affair, and forwarded it with mine to Khartoum, I hoped to have been accorded full forgiveness. That ended my elephant shooting; for though I had plenty more opportunities during the year, of which, of course, I was unable to take advantage, I never saw another when the time of prohibition had elapsed, and I was free to shoot again.

Writing of elephants reminds me of two amusing incidents which occurred at Mongalla. One of the artillerymen on board my boat, the *Abu Klea*, was a huge Egyptian, with the strength of two ordinary men. He worked well enough to begin with. One Friday morning, the weekly holiday, we were at Bor, and the men went out for strolls in the forest and amused themselves as best they might, there being no work at all that day save for the washing down of the decks in the early morning, and the cleaning of the guns. The stalwart artilleryman was amongst those who went out, but he somehow got separated from his companions, who arrived home at about eleven o'clock to sleep in true Egyptian style for the rest of the day. At about noon the missing man came in in a terrible state of heat, and quite exhausted. It appeared that he had been walking quietly along when he suddenly saw an elephant in the distance—very much in the distance too—but it had alarmed him to such an extent that he started running, and ran till he reached the boat. The animal, it appeared, had not seen him; but he did not want to give it the chance of doing so, and

bolted immediately. Poor fellow, I have seldom seen anyone so frightened. He sank on the deck exhausted, and developed a violent attack of fever as a result of his unwonted exertions. For evermore he was known as the "*Feel*," which is the Arabic name for elephant. It may be that his figure suggested the pseudonym in the first place. The incident was never forgotten. Some time afterwards he developed a slackness that was unbearable; he was constantly pleading sickness to avoid work.

On one occasion the men were ordered out to carry some boxes containing stores from the boat to the magazine, which was a couple of hundred yards from the shore. As usual, the work being rather heavy, the "*Feel*" was absent, and Borton, noticing this, sent for him. He arrived wrapped up in many blankets, and moaning a gentle accompaniment to his every movement. He was sent to the doctor for examination, who returned him with the brief comment, "Quite fit." Captain Borton took him very quietly. "The doctor says that you are not ill," he said.

"I'm not *very* ill now, I'm better," said the *Feel*.

"Get to your work then," said the officer. He glanced up at Borton, who was looking distinctly genial. This encouraged him to make one more venture to escape the work.

"I am not *very* ill, but it would be better if I could have light work," he said.

"Good," said Borton, and called the sergeant. "His honour the elephant," said Borton, speaking,

of course, in Arabic, "is not very ill, but it would be better if he could have some light work. Send for the chicken-crate from the boat." The crate arrived, a frail wicker affair to hold about four fowl at a time. "Good," said Borton again; "now fetch me one fowl." The bird was fetched. "Now call the men to the parade."

The men were called to the parade ground, and thither the basket with its solitary occupant was conveyed. Arrived there, the unfortunate artilleryman was called out in front of the whole force of Mongalla.

"Now place the crate on the head of his honour the elephant," was the command, and the order to march was given him, and he was kept marching up and down with a crate containing one anxious-looking fowl, in the face of all the battalion. At the fifth turn he could stand it no longer, and dropped to his knees, saying that he would do anything save this. "Are you strong enough to carry boxes?" he was asked, and on replying in the affirmative he was allowed to depart, and the other men were dismissed. He never shirked again, and subsequently got his stripes on Captain Borton's recommendation.

Defaulters had a very poor time under Captain Borton. The bugle would be blowing nearly all day and half the night, and certainly the unrest to which they were subjected had the desired effect. There was no rest now in being locked up; it was one perpetual round of fatigues, and the offenders became fewer and fewer as the method in which they were regularly treated became known.

It was at Bor that I saw the only herd of zebra which I came across in the Sudan. About half an hour before I had quite unintentionally killed a bush-buck hind. I had seen a buck a moment before, and did not know that there was a hind with it. Therefore, when a moment later I saw the form of the animal through the trees, I fired at once without looking for the head, to regret it a moment later as I saw the buck spring off some yards away. I was furious, and had started on my way back to the boat, when my gun-bearer informed me that he could see water-buck, and I turned to stalk them. It seemed to me when I got fairly close that they were a strange kind of buck, but my sight was not extraordinarily good, and my boy persisted that he was right. The dusk was falling, and at length he pointed out the form of an animal through the trees and assured me that it was a fine buck.

“ Can you see its horns ? ” I asked, mindful of the doe I had only just killed. “ Yes,” he answered, “ they are *very* big.” I raised my rifle, but at that moment the animal merged into a clear space, and I saw that it was a zebra ! I never trusted that boy again.

There were about fifty in this herd, and I got quite close to them and lay there watching for some minutes before they got wind of me and were off at a gallop. The shooting of these animals was prohibited in those days, and quite rightly, for they are very rare. As I was returning to the boat that day I got the biggest water-buck that I shot in the country.



Indeed, I was very lucky in my shooting while I was in those regions ; it was towards the end of the time that I spent in the Sudan, though I had visited the district on flying trips several times before.

The very last time that I was out big-game shooting, I had been out all the morning with but little luck. The place swarmed with water-buck, and I did not want to shoot one of these animals unless it had an exceptionally good head, for I had already got a good number, and the meat is not attractive. However, as there appeared to be no other game in the district, I started stalking a fine buck, and at last got to within range of him, where he was browsing in a small clearing. It had been difficult going, as the grass was very long, so I lay down to get a steady shot. I got the bead fairly on his heart, and was on the point of pulling the trigger when a Jackson's hartebeeste walked right across my line of sight. I had not known that there were any hartebeeste in the district, and I was so surprised that I nearly let the chance escape me. However, I pulled myself together in time, and fired before he had passed into the surrounding grass. He proved to be a very fine buck, so my last day's shooting turned out to be among my most successful ones.

It was just about this time that a Belgian officer, planting his men in the Bahr-el-Ghazal, and refusing to move them at the request of the British commandant of the province, gave us a little excitement at Mongalla. Had the thing led to war with Belgium, as seemed at one time to be possible, we should have



Photo by G. B. Middleton

A MORNING'S BAG



started with a bombardment of the Belgian forts on the Nile. We immediately became busy with gun practice, and it was scarcely comforting to find that the two big guns of the *Sheikh*, which was lying guardship at the Mongalla station, blew out their breeches as soon as they were tried. It was a good thing that war did not break out, for though the little pop-guns on the *Abu Klea* were in fair condition, she only had one heavy gun, and this would not have been very much use against the arrayed forces of the Belgians on the Nile. It was an exciting time, taking it all through. One never knew what the next orders from Khartoum might be, and in the meantime we cruised about and looked important.

The scare was productive of at least two good results. In the first place it led to a thorough overhauling of the gunboat fleet of the Nile; and in the second it led to the discovery of a channel by which boats could be sent up to Lado, the chief Congo port, without touching at Kiro, and without being seen from that point. Hitherto the only known navigable channel was the main one which ran immediately past the station of Kiro; therefore, had there been fighting, we would have been forced to waste our energy on this least important spot first, in order to free the channel for our fleet to the port of Lado further south. One day, however, it occurred to Captain Borton to try a small channel which led up into the swamp; and we found that there was a clear though narrow passage straight through, joining the main river some miles north of Kiro.



It is almost a pity that we never got the opportunity of using it, for it would have been such a tremendous surprise to the Belgians, who, as far as we know, are still in utter ignorance of its existence. Had there been fighting, my job would not have been altogether of the pleasantest, for I should in all probability have been sent up in advance of the main fleet to look for mines in the river ; and as we have every reason to believe that the Belgians had a comprehensive system ready to be worked at the first breath of trouble, it is more than probable that I should have found them.

The dispatches notifying us of the scare, and warning us to prepare for possible war, arrived about a week before we were timed to leave the district for the north, so it needed all the compensation of a really exciting time to make up for the disappointment. The grass was too high to shoot, it was raining nearly all day, and, to add to our annoyance, there was the thought that we should have been on our way on leave. Speaking for myself, I was pretty sick at first when I found that my leave was postponed, for I had not been out of the country for two years, and I felt that I needed a change. The most trying time of all came after the first scare had passed away, and it seemed to be improbable that there would be anything in the way of a fight ; but as nothing definite was settled, we were forced to remain idle, watching the northern horizon for the smoke of the steamer which would bring us definite news. It came at last, and the next day we left

Mongalla behind us in the morning, and though I had not the slightest idea at the time that I was not to return, it proved to be the last time that I saw the station, for I never got so far up the Nile again.

I was glad to leave the station, much as I had enjoyed the time I spent there. Torrential rain fell nearly every day, and rendered shooting an impossibility. The air was damp and heavy with the smell of decaying vegetation, and it was good to think of the sandy tracts of the north, where everything would be clean and dry.

We left Mongalla at about nine o'clock in the morning, and at half-past three, while I was still enjoying my after-lunch siesta, I was called by one of the sailors to see a sight that I would not have missed for the world. We had just rounded one of the numerous sharp curves in the river, and had come suddenly upon a gigantic herd of elephant which had been drinking, and playing about the banks. The herd included numerous baby elephants, and I was awakened in time to see them at play before they became aware of our approach. It was one of the prettiest sights which I have ever seen. Most of the baby elephants were right on the banks of the river, or had waded some way out into the water for a bath. Their mothers were plastering them with mud, and then washing it off with copious spouts of water from their trunks. At the very lowest computation there must have been quite four hundred animals in the herd. As soon as they became con-

scious of the presence of the steamer, they beat a dignified retreat into the surrounding jungles ; there was no hurry ; they simply strolled off, some of them picking green shoots off the trees as they went.

We took the journey to Khartoum in easy stages, running at night if the water was good, but if it was bad, tying up until the morning. The only drawback to the whole thing was the evil manner in which my boat behaved, especially as the fuel was consumed, and the holds became empty. She rocked and swayed in the wash of her own wheel like a rowing-boat in the Atlantic, and after a prolonged residence in the Sudan, one's nerves are not as strong as they are when one first arrives from England. I shall never forget it. I thought she would go down every moment, and it seemed a pity to lose her after having spent so many months on board. One evening we got right into the bank in rounding a particularly bad corner. I was just going into the engine-room, which was on the main deck, when a crocodile slid past me into a cabin just in front of me. I had not been drinking, so I had the courage to believe my eyes, and called the sailors to capture it. They came, and to my great disgust let the animal escape over the side ; it was quite a small one, and had evidently been awakened suddenly while sleeping on the bank, and had jumped in the first direction possible, which happened to be on to the boat.

## CHAPTER IX

### MISSIONARIES AND OTHERS

IN the time which had elapsed during my first arrival in the Sudan and my return from Mongalla, changes had been taking place in every direction. Marchand's fort at Fashoda had fallen, to make room for a more up-to-date building which was now the residence of the Mudir of the province, and while it certainly had no pretensions to beauty, it at least kept out the rain and wind. The town itself was fast losing its reputation as a fever spot, a good portion of the swampy ground had been cleared and was now clean, and the place was made cheerful with the sound of bugle calls. There was no longer any difficulty in getting the natives to take the coin of the realm, the difficulty now lay in the opposite direction, to prevent them taking too much ; everything was altered ; even the nature of the natives appeared to be becoming changed.

It is customary among a certain class of Englishmen to condemn missionaries and their work at first hearing. This is, I think, most unjust ; it is only fair that they should be accorded a judgment upon their merits, and as a body, just as any other body of men, should not be judged by isolated cases. I was interested in the study of the varying methods adopted



by the different sects of Christians, and the conclusions that I have arrived at regarding them have been made, I can honestly say, with a fair mind, unprejudiced by the religious claims of any one sect over that of another.

The Catholics, as I have already said, devote their labours almost entirely to lay teaching; they teach the native to till and work the land, to build, and they instruct them generally in the methods of organised labour. The question of actual religion is left to a future generation, when the minds of the people will be more receptive; when they will have at least attained that balance of thought which it is necessary to give to the subject, if their religious professions are to be anything more than a mockery. Therefore, I say that the presence of such men as the Catholic missionaries is for the country's good, rather than the opposite. They are accomplishing slowly and surely, the very work which is the most essential to the extended civilisation of the savages with whom they have to deal. They have never been known to influence the native of the Sudan in a manner which has not met with the complete approval of the Government. Visit one of the Catholic Mission camps and you will find the native clean, and in the cases of the younger members of the tribe, hard working. The appalling conservatism which stands as a barrier to universal labour has yet to be broken down, and that will be the work of many years. But the native is respectful—he recognises the line between the white man and the black; he is, in fact, a con-

tented savage, on the borderland of a new knowledge which leads to civilisation.

Of the work of the Church of England I cannot speak with the same authority, for it was only during the latter year of my tenure in the Sudan that her emissaries came out to work in the really wild parts of the country, where they had the barren soil of complete ignorance to work upon. Hitherto, the only Church of England clergymen who had been in the country as residents had very rightly remained at Khartoum. The only incident relating to the teaching of these clergymen that I can speak of, is one which it is perhaps hardly fair to quote, and I do so with all reserve, leaving my readers to decide whether it was due to teaching or to coincidence. I was at one time without a cook as I was leaving Khartoum for the south; my own cook having cut his hand to the bone with a broken bottle, was obliged to remain for treatment in the hospital. The clergyman who was at that time in Khartoum met me in the morning, and very kindly volunteered to find me a boy before the boat started, saying that if he could not find anyone else, he would send one of his own servants with me for the trip, which was to be a comparatively short one.

In the end, one of his own servants turned up at the boat, and I must admit that I disliked him from the first moment that I set eyes upon him. He was one of the Uriah Heep class, and was constantly doing things which set my nerves on edge. If I reproved him, which, by the way, I had occasion to do the first

day that he was on board, he looked at me with the air of an injured martyr; if I reproved him more strongly still, he turned away to hide the tears that sprang into his eyes. He would never explain anything; he left it all to his facial expression. I had been in the Sudan quite long enough to know the elements of housekeeping, at least I knew to a pound or two how much tea I should consume in a week; but the stores diminished before my eyes, and when I questioned this beauty, he would weep and turn away in silence, bearing my most un-Christian reproaches without a word. At length I found that he was charging me at the rate of one sheep a day for meat, and then my patience forsook me. I took him by the scruff of the neck and shook him till he spoke. He lied at first, of course, but eventually I got the truth: he was selling my stuff with the greatest calmness to wicked members of the crew who were tempting him. I put him ashore to work with a Government fatigue party till I returned.

Now I cannot help thinking that his training must have been at least partially responsible for his acknowledged knavery. A native once informing his master of wholesale thievery which was going on among his staff of servants, apologised for having mentioned it, but, he said, he felt that the case deserved special mention—"little, little, custom, but this bad work." And so I thought of him, "little, little" was all very well, but whole sheep at a time was rather too much of a good thing. I would not have minded so much had he brazened it out like any

other thief in the country, but I could not stand the air of injured innocence that he met all my accusations with. I felt like a sinner accusing a saint.

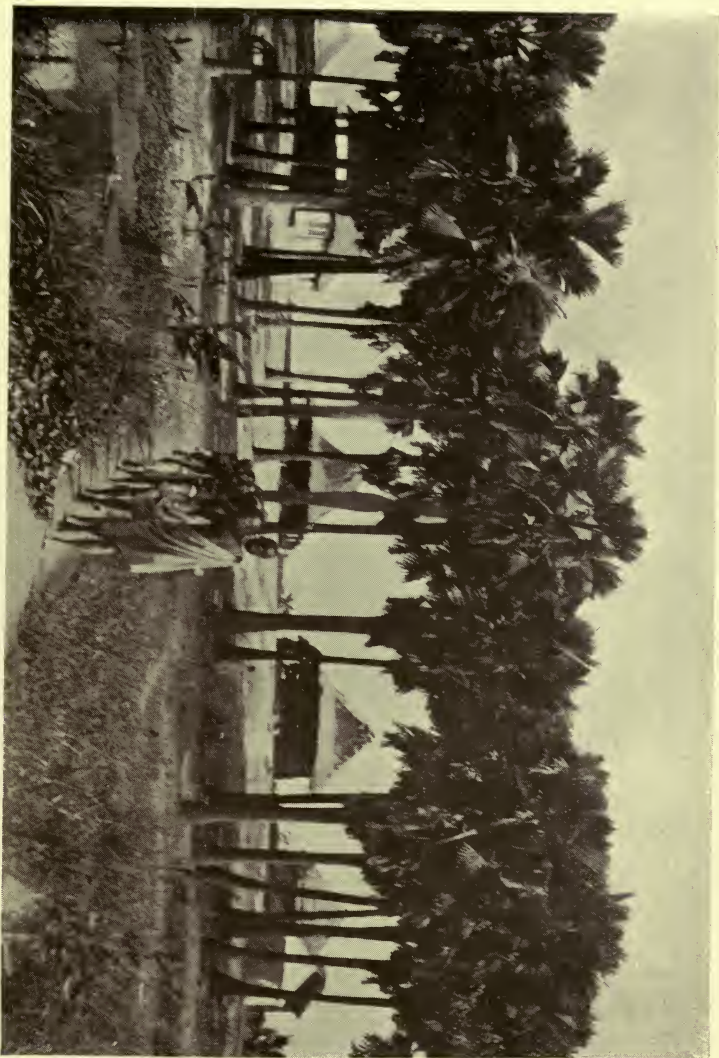
That is the one and only thing that I can say about the Church of England and its treatment of the natives ; for their work among the English Tommies they cannot be too highly praised ; everyone loved the clergyman—he was a thoroughly good sort. He was a Christian with all the elements of humanity in him, and that put everyone on a footing of ease with him at once.

The only other sect that I had any opportunities of watching was the American Mission, which had a station on the River Sobat. Now let me hasten to say that I have the very greatest personal admiration for the members of this mission whom I met during my sojourn in the Sudan ; they are self-sacrificing men and women, striving year after year for the cause of Christianity in the manner which they consider to be right. I admire them personally, and, of course, I admit the height and purity of their aims ; but I entirely and absolutely disagree with their methods of attaining them. In my opinion they go to work in the wrong way ; in a way which is not only calculated to be useless for the attainment of the very ends that they are in the Sudan to secure, but which is also to a certain extent dangerous to the country. The manner in which they spoil the natives is likely to render the task of the Government, in securing the unanimous and willing submission of all the tribes of the Sudan, more difficult than it natu-



rally is already. To question these methods is, I know, to open up the vexed controversies of centuries regarding the brotherhood of Christianity, the brotherhood of the white man to the black. I do so because I think that it is justified ; the preference extended to the black man here in contrary distinction to the treatment which he receives at the hands of the Catholic missionaries in the same country, is eminently unfair to all concerned, and, most of all, to the deluded native who is being gradually trained to the belief that he ranks on an equality with the white man ; more, that he is entitled to privileges such as the white man cannot obtain. The long and the short of it is that they are spoiling the native, and this is in my opinion little less than criminal, and I cannot understand the apathy of the Government which permits it. I have visited the Sobat River Mission Station with ladies, and we had to enter the house of the missionaries over the prostrate bodies of stark naked natives who were lying on the step, and who might not be disturbed or awakened. I have sat at the table inside the house, with a row of black heads straining in to watch what was going on ; and I have listened to the eulogies of the mistaken hosts, who pointed to the spectators with pride as examples of the trust and confidence with which they regarded their tutors.

What do they expect to make out of a savage race like this, if they deliberately spoil them at the very beginning ? When do they propose to attempt to imbue them with the respect which is due to a white



AMERICAN MISSION—RIVER SOBAT



woman, if not to a white man ? There are women in the Sobat Mission Station, brave American women, who are consecrating their lives to the service of their religion, ministering to the deluded blacks of Central Africa ; is it not a burning shame that they should be allowed to waste their energies in this manner, when two words from the Government would in all probability serve to turn their endeavours into practical channels which would be of use in the history of the country ? The whole system is wrong ; but it will be allowed to drift on, until the time that the pupils are brought to such a degree of self-satisfaction that they will become a danger to the country. Then the brake will be put on, and the whole thing pronounced a failure.

Little good is being done to the natives who come under the influence of this mission, while a great deal of harm is being accomplished. Another great mistake which these people have made, if, as is presumably the case, it is their intention to train the natives as useful members of society, is that of having imported wooden buildings from the States or elsewhere, instead of putting the black man to work at brick-making, and running up decent dwellings for themselves. When last I visited the station, the first consignment of what was I believe to be ultimately used as a school had just arrived, and was being got ready for erection. One could not but regret the waste of money which had gone to the purchase of such an elaborate building as this was evidently to be ; the more so as by the erection of



brick houses they would be giving employment to the natives, an experience which they might turn to their advantage at a later period of their pupilage. Also, one would imagine that a well-built house of brick would be far more suitable to the climate than one of wood, to say nothing of the absurdity of bringing it thousands of miles across the water, and then thousands of miles up-country. It would be sensible to every change of climate, and would be also liable to warp under the differing influences of tropical sunshine and torrential rains. It is sad at any time to see energy misdirected, and I consider that it was a most pitiful sight to see those men and women, who had been willing and ready to give up their lives to the service of the black man, undergoing all the discomforts and dangers of the climate under conditions that would benefit no one, least of all the people for whose good they had come to the country in the beginning. In Lower Egypt the good which this mission has accomplished is incalculable, but they are dealing with a different sort of people there ; the pioneer of civilisation has already done his work, and it only remains to those who follow to enlarge and extend the sphere of knowledge. But to place a school in the heart of savagery, and expect a lasting good to come of any efforts in the way of book-learning, when the people who are being taught are ignorant of the first rudiments of civilisation, is to expect too much. It is also absurd to treat the raw savage with the same consideration which would be accorded to the white man, and then expect him not to be spoilt.

It must not, however, be thought that this tendency to spoil the natives lies with the American only ; the greater blame rests with the Government which permits such hopeless mistakes to be committed before its eyes. But the truth of the matter is that the Government of the Sudan, in common with most of the other Governments of the world, has a wholesome dread of exciting public opinion on a subject like this. They know that a mistake, a grievous mistake, is being made ; but they have not the courage to put a stop to it, lest the charge of inhumanity be levied against them. It is always the same in cases of a similar nature to this. English men, or what is yet more terrible, English women, come out to the East to travel, and incidentally to put the English Government right at any point where it may happen to be tripping. One fine morning, when by all the natural laws of decency they should be still in bed and asleep, they take it into their heads to go for an early stroll, and happen across a black man receiving a well-deserved flogging. Then the fun begins : “ all Europe shall hear of how the Englishman acts abroad,” and so on *ad nauseam*. Eventually, to still the atmosphere, the Government dispatches an emissary of peace ; some man possessed of more than a human share of tact and patience, and the troubled waters are smoothed. He listens to the tale of horror with seeming indignation, “ an inquiry shall be immediately opened,” etc., and the ruffled tourist regains his, or her, composure. The incident is closed.

Now the Government knows, and the patient man

who has been deputed to lie to the incensed Britisher knows, that such a thing is necessary, they know that flogging is a part of the ancient code which cannot be done away with with impunity ; they know that the man upon whom the indignity has been imposed, suffers but an infinitesimal part of the feeling, either mental or physical, which would overwhelm the white man under similar circumstances ; in fact, they know what they are doing and know that the doing of it is right. And yet to pander to the sentiment of an untravelled, ignorant atom of the British Empire, they will sacrifice their own self-esteem to the extent of resorting to the telling of deliberate lies on the subject. Things have come to a pretty pass, when the chosen men of England have perforce to listen to the advice of any gentleman who chooses to procure a Cook's circular ticket, and wander over the face of the globe teaching legislators and officers their duty.

At a *fantasia* in the Sudan I have myself seen the part that a young man plays of his own free will, in order to obtain the title of *Ackou Binat* (the brother of the girls). This ceremony would turn the reformer's hair grey. The men and the women of a village sit round in a circle, leaving a space in the centre of some six yards in diameter. I describe it as I saw it myself. The strongest man of the village is then picked out of the crowd, and, armed with a whip of rhinoceros hide, he and the young man who is to strive for the title, enter the arena. The women beat their drums, and the men clap their hands to the tune. The candi-



Photo by G. B. Middleton

THE RAW MATERIAL—WHITE NILE





date for honour is stripped to the waist ; he stands with his arms folded in the centre of the ring, and the strong man dances up to him to the tune which is being played. He brings the whip round with all the force of which he is possessed and lands it on the bare back of the man in front of him. He dances away, again he advances, and the operation is repeated. This goes on until the number of strokes previously agreed upon have been dealt ; in the particular case that I saw it was twenty-five. If the man who is being flogged winces, if he so much as moves an eyelid as the whip descends, he is disqualified and branded as a coward, until such time as he may choose to undergo the operation a second time. On this particular occasion he went through with it like a Trojan ; indeed, the man who was delivering the blows got tired first, and the last three cuts of the twenty-five were unsteady, and flickered round the ear and neck of the " brother." I leave my readers to imagine the state of his back when all was over ; but he appeared to be as happy as a king, and certainly he was accorded a great ovation by the assembled crowd of women. His bravery and manliness was established for evermore !

And it is the men that can go through such ordeals for the sake of a more or less empty title that we are warned we must not touch for fear of hurting them. I do not advocate flogging unless it is necessary, but I maintain that there are times when it is necessary, and whereas by flogging, punishment is being inflicted upon the man who deserves it alone ; if you

resort to fining and other methods of touching a man through his pocket, it is likely that his family will suffer to an equal extent with himself. The necessity for this form of punishment will gradually die out in this country as it has elsewhere; but it must die without undue haste, all the circumstances attending it must be duly considered before conclusions are arrived at. I remember one case particularly where this method of punishment was particularly efficacious. It was in the later days, when, at times, the laxity of the British rule as applied to the Sudanese in certain districts by some of the officers of the Government was beginning to make itself shown in a regrettable manner. It must be understood that no civilian is entitled by law to order a man to be flogged unless he is vested with particular power, or unless he is a magistrate. I was at a wood station and was very much pressed for time, but the men were in a lazy mood and I could get them to work no quicker. One man in particular gave me a great amount of trouble, and eventually I sent word that his pay would be cut. He laughed in the face of my emissary; pay-day was a long way hence. After some time I went to him myself, and stood watching him slacking. He stopped as he was passing me, and grinned insolently. Then I took the law into my own hands. I sent for the sergeant of the Artillery, and ordered him to give the culprit twenty-five lashes, going on deck myself to see that the punishment was carried out as it should be, and with no half measures. The result was good; I descended to an altered

party of men—they were working as hard as they knew how. Later, I heard the sequel. They waited until the next time the Mudir's boat hove in sight. The Mudir of this province certainly erred on the side of leniency, and they went in a body and complained. Unfortunately for them the Mudir himself had gone north on leave, and his deputy only was on board. He heard the evidence, and then gave the sheikh of the party ten lashes for having allowed such a thing as the flogging of one of his men to be necessary !

Now, though our thin-skinned humanitarian friends will not see it, the refusal of a man to work, and his offering insolence to his master in a country like the Sudan, is very different to a similar happening at home. Popular opinion, or rather popular feeling, moves quickly in a country where the workmen are still little more than savages ; there is not only a loss of dignity involved in knuckling under to a recalcitrant black man, there is a danger of life, a danger to the Empire also, lurking behind an incident which would at home be looked upon as a simple thing not worth a moment's thought.

We have our own code of morals at the present day in England, and among other things it is considered wrong to inflict corporal punishment upon our fellows. This is all very well up to a certain point, after that point it becomes ridiculous. There is a tremendous outcry in these days if a refractory schoolboy is caned ; people say that it tends to degrade him in after-life. It may be so, but personally



I cannot see that the present generation, brought up under the régime which tends to make women of our boys, has created a finer race than that which fought at Waterloo or Trafalgar.

The whole tendency of modern training is opposed to corporal punishment of any kind or description ; but if we are to ruin our own country's future by the training of our sons to a pampered and unwholesome existence, that is no reason why we should also attempt to destroy the native principles of law which are the only ones by which we can successfully cope with the Sudanese. Truly the prospect of England is not particularly bright ; at the present time we are but in the youth of this new code of effeminate upbringing for our boys ; but who can picture the future when, by constant training, Englishmen will look with abhorrence at a closed fist, and pale at the thought of bloodshed ? The South African War brought a great many truths to light, and the number of " Little Englanders " who craved for peace at any price was astonishing. The self-satisfied can say what they like, Kipling struck the note of truth when he wrote the " Islanders," and he has gone deeper still in his appeal to a jaded nation with the publication of the " City of Brass." Thank God we still have some of the British spirit left ; there were innumerable instances of heroic bravery and staunch unflinching pluck in South Africa ; they were the rule rather than the exception, but—

" . . : Your strong men cheered in their millions  
While your striplings went to the war."

Was there no truth in that? Thousands of our strongest men went out to act the part of spectators while paid men kicked a ball about a field during the darkest days of our South African history; then they made a bear-garden of London, as, half-intoxicated, they paraded the streets, yelling of the glory of England when we succeeded in holding a small post from defeat.

Sport is the mainstay of Britain; but sport does not consist in going week after week to see paid men perform, and the man who cheers the loudest has, in all probability, never stretched his muscles in honest exercise himself; his sport (*sic*) consists in watching the game and reading an account of it in the daily papers the following morning. This is, perhaps, a digression from my original subject, but it all tends in the same direction; it is the general attitude of the new generation, and it constitutes England's greatest danger.

To return to the subject of missionaries; it will, I think, be seen from what I have written that though it is manifestly unfair to include them all in one sweeping condemnation, they very often do plant obstacles in the way of the efficient treatment of newly reclaimed countries; but this could be rendered to a great extent harmless if their presence in the country was subject to the direction of the Government, in fact, as well as in form. No good is done by the strange reluctance of the governing powers in the Sudan to exercise their undoubted right of checking this spoiling of the natives; it is

cruel alike to the missionaries and to the natives themselves. The first thing to be done is to civilise, and as long as this can be done without giving the natives an undue sense of their own importance, a great and lasting good will be accomplished by the organisation or individual who can compass it. But it must be always borne in mind that the people to be dealt with are children in some things, and men with the guile of men in others, and should be treated accordingly.

Each time that I revisited Khartoum after an absence up-river, a change was noticeable ; not only was the work of the English progressing in the way of house construction and the laying out of streets, but in the natives themselves an indescribable change was increasingly evident. It was obvious that they were becoming more civilised, but it was impossible to define in what manner. It was not only that there were more of them dressed in smarter clothes, this was the least noticeable feature ; they had assimilated the atmosphere of civilisation in some extraordinary way ; an atmosphere that was everywhere visible while yet not being conspicuous. The traders and workmen in the markets were rejoicing in renewed prosperity ; but alas ! the price of curios was steadily on the increase. In the town itself the change was very noticeable ; the gardens beyond which the Grand Hotel now stands were then being laid out, and a few animals had been procured for the foundation of a zoological garden ; the trees which had been planted on either side of the streets

were springing up with marvellous rapidity, and the whole place was assuming an entirely different aspect to that which it had held the day when I first saw it. The Palace, which was formerly bare-fronted to the ground, was now graced by a verandah, and the space in front of the War Office had been cleared and made an imposing parade-ground.

In connection with the verandah at the Palace comes the recollection of the Public Works Department as it was in those days. This Department, known as the Department of Works, was responsible for more blunders than all the other departments of the Government put together. The verandah of the Palace, successfully completed at last, was, through some error of miscalculation, in danger of collapsing altogether while still in the course of construction, and was propped up for some time with iron girders. The building of the Department itself was, even at the time of my departure, stayed up with huge baulks of timber, in order to prevent it from falling on to the house next to it. This house was, by an irony of fate, the residence of the Director of Works. The much-talked-of sea-wall will, as long as it stands, be a monument of incompetence to those who were responsible for its erection.

It is not possible to blame individuals in these instances, since the men in whose hands the work was laid were not men whom one would expect to carry through such big works as this; they lacked not only experience, but actual training, and once more the fault must be allocated to the Government



for persisting in their appointment to positions which they were unable to fill with credit. The master-tailor of a regiment is trained to clothe the men, and he does it efficiently and well, but where is the officer who would depute him to build him a Court dress for a Buckingham Palace levee ? Thus an officer of the Royal Engineers, though he is trained to throw a temporary bridge across a river, or to design sufficient shelters for his men in time of necessity, emphatically is not trained to undertake large works of building design and construction, and it is not fair to give him this work to do, and then blame him when he fails. The sea-wall at Khartoum, for instance, was by no means a small job. The current of the Blue Nile in flood is tremendous, and in addition to this there are so many geological questions regarding foundations to be considered, that it would be regarded as a big job by some of the well-known firms of Westminster. Yet, in spite of this, we find officers of the Royal Engineers placed in charge of its construction, and we wonder when there are signs of insufficient foundations, evident in a cracked wall, before it has been completed a year. Taking all the circumstances into consideration, the Government is fortunate in that a wall remained at all after the first flood ; and though it is a pity that the work was not entrusted in the first place to the hands of experts, the men who are responsible for it as it stands, are distinctly to be congratulated upon having carried through the work with so few faults.

There have been many attacks made upon the

Government for having retained a Military administration so long ; but these are for the most part unreasoning, and for the greater part unjustified. Far more harm would be likely to accrue to the country through changes being wrought with too great a rapidity. The continuance of Military administration for any length of time after the soldiers' work is actually done, does not necessarily imply that there is to be a continuance of martial law. The Government is to all intents and purposes Civil ; but at the same time, the strength and privileges of Military authorities lie ready to hand for immediate application if it should be considered necessary to exercise them, and any particular portion of the Military code can be applied at will. The disadvantage of the system lies in the fact that many of the posts are held by men who are, in the strict meaning of the term, amateurs, although the closest examination of the records of the Sudan will, I think, fail to reveal a single instance where an abuse of power has been exercised, or more than technical errors committed. Civilians are draughted into the service under the supreme control of the Sirdar, who is also Governor-General ; these civilians will gradually replace the soldier in the administrative and other positions in the Government. In the above remarks I am excluding the subject on which I have already written at some length, that of the employment of officers of the Royal Engineers for the carrying through of works for which they were obviously and naturally incompetent.

With the question of the continued occupation of the dual position of Governor-General and Sirdar by one man, as also with one or two other questions in which favouritism has undoubtedly been permitted to enter into the scheme of things, I will attempt to deal later ; but I maintain that taking it upon the whole, the Sudan is a bright example of the capability of our Army officers to deal with Administrative and other matters which they might be well excused for finding difficult.

In one respect, the Government has been gravely at fault. I refer to the marked line which has always been drawn between the Military and Civil elements ; not socially, but in the manner in which the two elements of the administration have been presented to the native. The Sudanie has been impressed from the beginning with a sense of the importance and the power of the Military man ; he has in some cases been allowed to regard the civilian official as a secondary consideration, which, in view of the fact that in the course of time it will lie with the civilian, and with the civilian alone, to carry on the work of the country, is hardly fair to him. The difference in the regard which the native extends to a man in uniform and a man without, is very marked ; and one cannot but think that it would have been wiser to make the white *man* supreme so long as he behaved himself, and have let the native know at the outset that an Englishman, no matter what his position, was entitled to an unqualified respect. In isolated cases it is unfortunately true that the officer has not always played up

to his white subordinate, and though these cases are of such seldom occurrence as to make it almost unnecessary to mention them, the moral effect is inclined to be very far-reaching, and it is calculated to greatly increase the difficulties of the coming régime of civil administration unless rigorous impartiality is insisted upon.



## CHAPTER X

### THE COUNTRY AND ITS SPORT—THE BLUE NILE

THE Blue Nile, unlike the White, is only navigable for about half its course in the Sudan, even during the months of the flood ; in the summer, transport by steamer is only possible as far as Wad Medani, the rest of the journey has to be made by small boats or by land. On the Blue Nile, from the moment that Khartoum is left behind, the journey is as different to that of the White as the sea is different to the land. It is far harder to realise that one is in the Sudan on this river than it is on the other ; the stream flows with greater strength and fullness than do the more lazy waters of the White Nile. The scenery is entirely different. The banks are high, and even while still within a few miles of Khartoum there is a suspicion of undulating ground on either side of the river. Small beehive-shaped habitations lie clustered among the trees ; there is no swamp ; it is like a scene in Europe, with the exception of the huts. The larger villages are also quite different from anything met with to the southern side of the Sudan.

Kamlin, which has recently been so much before the public by reason of the murder of Mr. Scott-Moncrieff, is the first village of any importance south

Photo by G. B. Middleton

"THE OLD CUSTOMER"—BLUE NILE BUFFALO





of Khartoum. The village is not very large, but it is a picturesque place, and the surrounding country is pretty, and well wooded. Rufaa, the next place, is somewhat similar; I remember it principally on account of the beautiful-plumaged birds which are to be seen here in the surrounding forests. They are of the gorgeous colouring which one associates with tropical forestry. There are a few gazelle a little way inland, but these are all of the commonest species. Guinea-fowls abound in hundreds, and there are also some hare to be seen occasionally.

On my first trip up the Blue Nile I had a native harem on board, a mother and two daughters. They were the family of a native Bimbashi (Major), and it was curious to see the difference which time had wrought in the education of the Egyptian. The mother, a portly dame, who was never, of course, visible except under her yashmak, could speak no language than that of her native tongue, Arabic. Her eldest daughter, a charming girl of about twenty, could speak French fluently, but no English; while the youngest, a child of about ten, could not speak French, but could chatter away in almost perfect English. This child undertook to teach me Arabic, and though she was a hard taskmaster, she certainly taught me a very great deal. She hated to see me doing anything else, and would set me three pages of nouns to learn off by heart at a time; what was more, she was furious if I did not learn them quickly, or if I made a mistake in them the next day.

Egyptian women are supposed to be entirely subject



to their mankind, but in this case the positions were certainly reversed, for I was terrified of her.

Wad Medani, the chief town on the Blue Nile, is a fine place, covering a large tract of land on the western bank. At the time of my visits to the Blue Nile the whole of that province was under the jurisdiction of an almost ideal Mudir or Governor, Colonel Gorringe, who, it will be remembered, commanded a Flying Horse squadron in South Africa during the late war. In some ways, perhaps, he exceeded the limit of harshness which it is proper for a white man to follow in his dealings with the black ; but it is impossible to compare the administration of a man like this, with that of one who is constantly spreading the doctrine of all men being equal, without seeing the poisonous fallacy of the latter. He was not liked by the natives, but he was certainly respected ; they did him the honour of considering him to be a strong man, and there is no greater praise than that from a Sudanie. During the command of Colonel Gorringe, the receipts of the Blue Nile Province were increased by almost a hundred per cent. He was here, there, and everywhere, always on duty, and entirely just, if harsh, in his judgments.

A firm of private enterprise for the purpose of corn-crushing had been started in Wad Medani just before I arrived there, but it was not a financial success, and it was closed after a brief life of some few months.

Nearly all the houses in Wad Medani were at that time built of mud and straw, though I hear that

several brave residences of brick and stone have risen since those days.

From Wad Medani south, the river is not navigable except for the smallest craft during the winter months. The bed of the river is exceedingly rocky, and there is no channel of sufficient width and depth to float a steamer. A gunboat is, therefore, sent up to Roseires regularly during the last week of flood, and is stationed there for the whole of the low Nile season. It is only removed from its moorings under exceptional circumstances, but remains there as guardian of the frontier.

There are only two stations of any real importance between Wad Medani and Roseires: Senaar and Senga. The latter station is the head-quarters of the Mudir during certain seasons of the year, and it is now quite a flourishing place. Senga also marks the borderland of the shooting-district in the Blue Nile Province; there is no game other than gazelle to be got further north. Elephant are sometimes to be seen near this station, but only very occasionally.

As I have said, the banks of the Blue Nile are much higher than those of the White Nile, and the outlook is more picturesque in every way; huge trees and creeping vines are to be found in the forests; it is ideal tropical scenery. Between Senga and Roseires it is exceptionally beautiful; the river curves in and out among high banks lined with forests, and as you pass it is no uncommon sight to see leopards and other animals drinking at the foot of the bank. Monkeys are plentiful all along the river after passing Wad Medani. Roseires is, at first sight, somewhat

disappointing after the scenes which have been left behind. The town stands on the right bank of the river, and is, according to the English fashion, very scattered. The British Inspector's quarters stand at the summit of the hill on which the town was built ; but at the time when I visited the place, many trees had been cut down and it looked rather bare. But on the higher banks, as well as upon those which immediately border the Nile, there are some gigantic and evidently very ancient trees still standing, wood for fuel and other purposes being almost exclusively taken from the smaller growths. When I last visited it the town was small, though there have been numerous additions and improvements made since that time. In those days, there were an average of three Englishmen stationed in the post—the Commandant of the station, an Inspector, and an official of the Slave Trade Repression Department. This Department, under the inspectorship of Mr. Leonard Gorringe, did an infinite amount of good almost immediately after its introduction. Several parties of slave-dealers were captured, and the slaves liberated. I recollect one party particularly. A notorious dealer in human cargo was reported to be moving from his stronghold in the mountains with a large party of youths and maidens ; the officials of the Department set out with a patrol and surprised him as he was crossing the Nile from the east to the west bank. I saw the whole party later ; the slave-dealers were shackled and were working in the garden of the Mudirieh, while the released slaves mounted

guard to give notice of any attempt at escape. The tables had been turned with a vengeance.

Mr. Gorringe had, at the time of my departure, organised a series of stations on the blockhouse system, which makes it extremely difficult for slave-traders to escape with their prey. The Department is supplied with horses, camels, and mules, and its officials and men, under their energetic leader, are constantly on the move with experienced trackers, so that the first movement of a party of dealers is usually known to the Government men almost as soon as it has been made. The Department is working in a similar way in other parts of the Sudan, and the results more than justify the expense which the vigilance incurs. The larger question of the liberation of slaves who were the property of their owners at the time when the Sudan was reconquered, is dealt with later in this book. It is, in its way, one of the most important of the questions in the Sudan.

On the west side of the river, that is to say, on the bank opposite to Roseires, the river is bordered by dense forestry for some miles inland; and for many miles after the thicker growths have been left behind, trees are still very plentiful, in spite of the fact that they are for many months in the year absolutely without water. The gunboat on which I served at Roseires was stationed immediately opposite the town on the west bank, and this position is, I believe, the one still adopted each year at time of low Nile. Should a rising occur, the fact of having a fighting machine of this description ready for immediate use



would tell enormously in our favour, even though it would, by reason of the low water, be forced to remain in practically the same place.

Beyond Roseires, to the south, navigation is impossible at certain points, and there is not sufficient merchandise to justify the expense of the extensive blasting operations which would be required in order to make the river fit for traffic. I was fortunate in being stationed at this place when the launch destined to meet the McMillan expedition from the south came from Khartoum. The expedition was ill-fated and never got further than a few miles off Addis Abbaba, the boats in which the journey was to be made smashing on some rocks in the first cataract. The launch I speak of had been specially imported into Egypt for the use of Mr. McMillan, and was to meet him at a point some miles south of the Sudanese boundary in Abyssinia. When it arrived at Roseires, the engineer in charge very kindly asked to take me, with another Englishman, over the first cataract. We accepted the invitation, and for my own part I regretted it some hundreds of times during the few hours that the expedition took. To begin with, the launch was utterly unfitted for the purpose required of it; it was affected by the slightest current, and, to make matters worse, the steering-wheel came loose and worked itself off frequently, with the result that we would turn and charge the rocks. How the boat escaped destruction I can never imagine. Time and again a current would catch it, and at the rate of some fifteen miles an hour we would advance

upon the rocks, and fancy that all was over. Had one been precipitated into the water, there would have been rather a poor chance of saving oneself, for the current was tremendous, and the place abounded with crocodiles. However, with the exception of a few heavy bumps we escaped disaster and landed safely on the south side of the cataract at four o'clock.

But my nerves suffered in consequence, and shooting a couple of hours later, I missed a standing bush-buck at about twenty yards. The scenery at this point, about eight miles south of Roseires, is magnificent; the banks are very high and clothed with trees and creepers—it is the most tropical spot in the whole of the Sudan. The forestry around is alive with game of all descriptions, and the first day that I went out shooting I saw no less than four distinct species of antelope, and also three buffalo.

There is no question but that this district offers infinitely better sport than do the plains of the White Nile. Game is not perhaps quite as plentiful, and it is harder to get at, but there is no comparison in the sport of the thing; it is all undulating country, and one never knows on ascending to the summit of one rise what may be found in the valley at the other side.

Roseires and its surrounding district is to me the ideal spot of the Sudan. Not only is it absolutely healthy in the winter months—from October until May—the whole country is magnificent; there is an endless scenic variety which is supremely attractive after the flatter regions of the White Nile. During my stay at this station I walked an average of twelve

miles daily, and was never more fit in the Sudan. Close to where my ship lay the forest started ; there was a sward of grass a couple of hundred yards wide along the bank of the river, and then one plunged into the thicket at once.

During the first week of my stay there I was given a puppy, an Armunté, the Egyptian sheep-dog, which is supposed to be directly descended from the French sheep-dogs which were imported by the great Napoleon when he visited the country. One afternoon a number of men came in from the mountains of Ghooly, to the west, and the chief was greatly struck with the dog ; then at last, finding that I was not going to make him a present of it, he started making me offers of exchange, in red pepper. Finally, when it came to half a ton of the stuff, I had to tell him very forcibly that I would not part with the animal for any money, and so got rid of him. Some of these men were exceedingly fine specimens of humanity. It was their first visit to the Nile, and they could at first scarcely credit the sight of so much water in one place, since in their own country all that they saw was at the time of the rains, and they are forced to rely upon the moisture of the vegetation in their district for water at certain times of the year. They took the keenest interest in the boat and its complement. Again and again they returned to the telescope, after having once succeeded in looking through it. At first it was a matter of great difficulty to induce them to try ; they seemed to think that it might be charged. Then, when their doubts in this direction had been set



Photo by G. B. Middleton

NATIVES OF GHOLLY



Figure 1 consists of four scatter plots arranged in a 2x2 grid. Each plot shows a distribution of 1000 simulated data points, represented by small circles. The top row shows two distributions with different parameters, and the bottom row shows two distributions with different parameters. The points are scattered across the plot area, with some clusters and some outliers. The axes are labeled with numerical values, and the overall shape of the distributions varies between the four plots.

at rest, it was discovered that it was impossible for them to shut one eye at a time ; but it was at length accomplished by one man putting his hand over the eye of the other who was gazing through the telescope, and so on in turn. They were immensely impressed, and appeared to think that it was magic. Not less interested were they when one of their number caught sight of himself in a looking-glass. He was terribly frightened for a moment when he realised that he was looking at himself, and after much peering and ejaculation, he asked who it was put his face round on the other side of the glass to look through at him ! It was most amusing on such occasions to watch the contempt of the more enlightened Sudanese for their poor uninformed brothers, and I noticed that it was invariably the most ignorant and lazy of these, who made the most sport of those who had not had the same advantages of education as themselves.

The arrival of these people was a great score for the authorities, as the tribe had always been a rebellious one, which had refused to recognise the Government, and their Mek, or King, had always steadfastly refused to pay taxes, or to allow his followers to assist the Government in any way. He had come in at last without coercion, and has, I believe, been a faithful supporter of ours ever since. They were very well treated on their arrival, and everything that was considered to be of interest was shown to them, not excluding the work and purpose of rifles and guns. Cases such as these, where natives come in of their

own accord and subsequently acknowledge the new régime, are of very great value to the Government, as such news spreads rapidly through the country, and has a good effect on other refractory tribes.

The same night that I had refused the offer for my dog, I was going to bed ; we had then built a straw house on the bank immediately above the boat ; the dog was sitting in the verandah, when suddenly it gave three short barks and then a yelp. I rushed out just in time to see a large dark shadow disappearing into the wood, and the dog had gone. The night was black and stormy, and it was therefore impossible to do anything to find it. In the morning we found the tracks of a huge leopard ; it had come right under the verandah to secure its prey, and had then only gone about a hundred yards before consuming it. A part of the mask was all we found of my unfortunate dog ; and to add insult to injury, we found that the thief had descended, again through the verandah, to the river, and had evidently stood on the ship's gangway while he slaked his thirst after his meal. I think it must have been the same leopard which was killed subsequently by some natives of the village immediately south of Roseires, after first killing one man outright, wounding a second so badly that he died from the effect of his wounds shortly afterwards, and also mauling a third terribly, though the latter recovered from his injuries after months of careful treatment. It came about in this way. One night a leopard boldly penetrated the zareba of the village, and after killing half a dozen sheep made off with the

finest in the flock. The next morning the women of the village assembled and calling the men together, taunted them with cowardice. "Are you women or are you men?" asked the spokeswoman of the assembled tribe; "if you are men you will not sleep until the leopard which has robbed our flocks is dead; if you are women you will rest at home at ease." Stung to the quick by the taunt, and not deigning to call upon any of the white men at the station, three chosen men sallied forth to revenge the theft of the night before. The animal was easily tracked from the camp, and the men, armed with spears, followed the spoor at last into a sea of dried grass as high as themselves. Once or twice they caught glimpses of the retreating animal, and at last, unable to go further, heavy as it was with stolen meat, it waited and sprang upon the party as they were pushing their way through some particularly troublesome undergrowth. Unable to use their spears with any freedom on account of the tangle, one man died on the spot before the others had well realised what had happened, and the second also was badly mauled before the third could use his spear. Eventually, however, he got a thrust home, a thrust ultimately fatal to the animal, but not sufficiently severe to prevent its turning and grappling with him for some moments before it fell dead.

I offered as much as two pounds for the skin of the fallen animal, a tremendous sum for that district; the natives, however, refused to part with it, and I heard afterwards that the skin had been cut up and



distributed among the tribe as a charm against further disaster.

The natives themselves are, in this part, fine up-standing men, and keen hunters. They live almost entirely on the game which falls to their spears, and they are the most wonderful trackers in Africa. I have known my guide to follow at the double a track which, to my eyes, was invisible without a close and sustained search on the ground. Girt only in a loin-cloth and carrying either a spear or a stick, they are perfect pictures of black humanity when they start forth on the chase, and no less perfect are they when the day's hunt is done and they swing back with an unaltered gait to camp. They are apparently tireless. I have not only spent long days shooting with them, but have also hunted on horseback, with the men following on foot, and I have never seen a man really wearied.

The administrative powers and sternness of Colonel Gorringe's rule were very evident here ; a white man was a white man, and there was no doubt about it. Indeed, the province of the Blue Nile which came under his sway was by far the best ordered in the Sudan at that time. Everywhere one went the whole village would turn out to see you comfortably housed, and offerings of milk and eggs were invariably made. There were Government rest-houses at most of the principal villages, though it was a literal Purgatory to stay at most of them on account of the noise. Once only it was my fate to do so, and that was when being suddenly attacked by a dose

of fever, while out shooting, I thought it injudicious to remain the night in the open air, and made for the nearest village. The rest-house was beautifully clean, and for the first half-hour I thought that I was in luck's way ; then night fell, and the people went to bed. Gradually the various sounds of the night began to grow, and they increased in volume as the hours went on. First of all every dog in the village started barking, and there were many dogs. Then the fowls woke up and joined in the chorus, and occasionally a child would wake to scream. When the hyenas and jackals arrived outside the zareba the general pandemonium had reached its height, and for the rest of the night it was useless to attempt to sleep. Never was morning's light more welcome than it was upon that occasion ; but as I woke without a trace of fever the night had not been spent in vain.

The whole province of the Blue Nile is of extraordinary fertility ; anything appears to grow with the minimum of trouble. Potatoes thrive here, and this is about the only part of the Sudan where they can be grown with any degree of success. Fruit is not plentiful ; but this is, I think, simply because it has never been properly tried. There are a few bananas, but that is all. Gum is to be found in the forests, but it is not in saleable quantities. The natives love it, and every man on a long day's march keeps a constant look out for fresh gum to chew. I tasted it, but I cannot say that the result was pleasing.

The railway which is at present being constructed in the Blue Nile Province does not, I believe, touch

at this point ; but it will be a comparatively easy matter at a future date to extend it to meet any demands of agricultural or other need which may crop up. And undoubtedly the province is one which will pay extraordinarily well when it is put under agriculture. The needs of Egypt, of course, come first in regard to the annual water supply ; but the district is one which, I believe, would be almost fully irrigated by its natural supply of rain. Crops such as are grown in England would be eminently suitable here, far more so than the ordinary products of the tropics, for the nights in the winter are exceedingly cold, and the days often very far from being tropical in their heat.

As in other districts of the Sudan, the effects of the first rains are very striking. One day the country will be brown and comparatively bare ; the next day there will be a shimmer of green over the land ; and in three or four days' time the grass will be shoulder high, and almost impenetrable. The enormous damage done to the forests by fires in other parts of the Sudan are scarcely felt here, thanks again to the unrelaxing efforts of the late Mudir of the province, Colonel Gorringe. He succeeded in utterly stopping the dangerous and destructive practice of the natives in this direction, and such a thing as an extensive forest fire is almost unknown in the district, since, even if one is started, the inhabitants of the surrounding villages know better than to let it gain any hold on the country. Thousands of pounds' worth of damage is done annually

in other parts of the Sudan, but the forestry in the Blue Nile is flourishing. It is perhaps only fair to add that the people of the Blue Nile are distinctly more civilised generally than some of their neighbours in the White Nile Provinces.

The country between Roseires, the last post on the Nile where it is practicable to take a steamboat, and Famica, the last station in the Sudan, which stands some thirty kilometres from the Abyssinian frontier, is exceedingly beautiful. The land is undulating and thickly wooded. Game is plentiful the whole way up, though one of my most disappointing trips in the Sudan was that which led me to Famica. To begin with, I was unfortunate in my choice of time, as it turned out to be the hottest week that I spent in the Blue Nile Province. In addition to this, I made the fatal mistake of attempting too long a march on one day, and was consequently good for nothing on the next. Finding the heat too much for me in the middle of the afternoon, as the road lay with the sun directly at my back, I decided to camp till an hour before sunset and then march on that night to a place called Abou Shenania, a point which I hoped to reach at about midnight.

The first part of the march was lovely; occasionally I heard the rustling of a startled animal tearing away into the thickets on either side of the rough track, and once I caught the outline of an antelope, but it was too dark to shoot with any chance of success. Midnight came, and we were still marching. An hour later we met a party of



natives proceeding north, and eagerly inquired the distance to our goal. "*Gareeb khalis*" (very near), was the reply, "just round the next corner." We marched on, and at intervals of about half an hour we met other parties and repeated our question, invariably receiving the same reply. I never got so sick of anything in my life as I was of the sound of those two words, *gareeb khalis*. At length, when it was nearly 3 a.m., I decided to march another quarter of an hour and then stop, whether we had arrived at Abou Shenania or not. We had not, but after tethering the baggage donkeys we sank down by the side of the track and were asleep in less than a minute. The next morning, or, to be more precise, an hour or so later, I woke and saw the longed-for rest-house nestling in the shade of some trees not five hundred yards from where I lay! We moved on, and far too tired to attempt to shoot successfully, I retired to the cool of the rest-house and went to sleep again, waking, hot and bad-tempered, at about half-past three. Lunch and tea combined, however, did much to raise my drooping spirits, and I went out to try my luck. There was no luck. I bagged a couple of guinea-fowl close to the camp as I was going out, and got nothing else that day. The next, I had to begin my march homewards, determined this time to do the distance by easy stages; but I never got anything larger than gazelle, and returned with no bag at all, feeling utterly miserable. To make matters worse, I got a touch of fever on the last day out, and spent the entire day's march



Photo by G. B. Middleton

FOREST SCENERY—BLUE NILE



in attempting to find impossible rhymes to terminate that diabolical little verse about Little Goody Two-shoes. Two Shoes, Blue Shoes, New Shoes, True Shoes, and so on. With wearying persistency my brain sought what it could not find, and my feet walked to the swing of the words. I never wish to repeat the experience. For many weeks afterwards it was sufficient to threaten a march to Abou She-nania in order to reduce complaining gun-bearers to an abject state of docility.

It was on the same road, however, that later I saw my first leopard at close quarters. I had been shooting in the forest on the east side of the Nile and had got an orebie, and I was returning to lunch across an open space, surrounded with trees and long grass, when a leopard crossed my path some sixty yards in front. Just as I fired he began to trot, with the result that I missed the heart and hit him too far in the stern. He swung round with a roar, and for a moment it was exceedingly doubtful who was to do the lunching. Then, in the excitement of the moment, I quite overlooked the fact that the magazine of my rifle was closed, and consequently I was unable to get a fresh cartridge in. I turned and fled. Happily, however, for my subsequent peace of mind, I thought of the magazine, and got another bullet in in time to give the animal a second shot just as he was turning into the thicket. Thinking it over afterwards, I came to the conclusion that he could not have seen me at all, but had simply charged blindly in the direction from which



the shot had come. I followed the blood spoor into the grass until I lost it, but finally decided not to risk a further search then, as the grass was very high, and if the animal was only slightly wounded and sprang, there would be no chance of retaliation at all. I therefore left him for the time and returned after lunch, when his wounds would have stiffened and there would be less chance of disaster. I never found him. The place was full of small tracks, any of which might have been caused by his passing ; but I found no further traces of blood, and darkness at length forced me to relinquish my search. Some of the grass, in dying, takes on a peculiar red-brown tinge, which is for all the world like dried blood, and this makes the tracking of wounded animals extremely difficult. The same evening I had just turned into my bed of straw and one blanket, which had been arranged on the sandy beach of the Nile, when some dark forms passed about a hundred yards off, and in the rising moonlight I could distinguish, with the aid of my glasses, a fine herd of roan antelope making their way to the river to drink. I followed them down the sand, but, foolishly, I went in the soft-leather boots which I slept in to guard my feet from the attentions of sand-flies, and consequently the moment that I reached the shingle I was forced to move so slowly that they had started on their return journey to the forest before I could get near to them. In the end I did not get a shot, as they were too far off for me to distinguish them plainly ; and if I fired and missed, I ran the risk of

scaring all the animals from the immediate district, and so losing the morning's shoot for no account. I remember that I was awake the greater part of that night; the place swarmed with hyenas, and I could never trust the boys to keep the fire going after midnight, so there was always the danger of losing one or both of the baggage donkeys if a careful guard was not kept.

The hyena, the most cowardly of the four-footed species, hesitates not a moment when he sees an animal safely tethered and waiting for his bite. Numerous animals were destroyed by hyenas, or so maimed that it was necessary to shoot them, in the village of Roseires itself. They are vermin of the worst description. I frequently thought of the annoyance which they must cause the more lordly beasts, such as the lion and the leopard; for these jackals of the hunt are never silent. Following in the wake of one of the former animals, they give tongue constantly until the kill, when they squat down at a safe distance in the hope of picking up a few bones when the others have finished their meal. Their cry is a long-drawn howl of the most intense melancholy; it is fascinating at a distance, as it swells out into the night; it is filled with the pathos of a quest which is beyond human understanding, but the illusion fades when heard at very close quarters, when it strikes one as being harsh and unfeeling. Hyenas possess enormous power of the jaw, and can easily break a donkey's leg with one snap of the teeth. I never saw one alive while I was

in the Sudan ; they are exceedingly wily, and slink away at the first hint of an unaccustomed sound.

The lions of the Blue Nile are far smaller than those of the White. My ill-luck regarding these animals pursued me here, and I never saw one during the eight months of almost continuous shooting that I had in the district. Frequently I was hot on their trail, and I have heard them in the jungle, but I never caught a glimpse of one.



Photo by G. B. Middleton

A FALLEN MONARCH





## CHAPTER XI

### VARIED EXPERIENCES ON THE BLUE NILE

THE people of the Blue Nile Provinces have, by reason of the nature of the country which they inhabit, a far wider sphere of interest than their neighbours of the White Nile. The southern portions of the former provinces are rich in mineral possibilities; a slag, closely resembling that which is found in all coal-fields, has been discovered on the borders of Abyssinia, and if this mineral is to be found in the Sudan at all, it is more than probable that it will prove to lie in these districts. The value of such a discovery would be inestimable; several prospecting parties have already visited the Blue Nile and Northern Abyssinian provinces, and though, so far, none of these have been actually successful, the presence of the slag to which I have alluded points hopefully to better things in the future.

A few natives of Roseires eke out a bare living by sifting the sand of certain portions of the river south of the town for gold. It is found in very small quantities, but a hard-working man can make about five piastres, or a shilling a day, and this is, of course, ample to meet all his requirements in the way of food and raiment. There is a little gold, too, on the

northern borders of Abyssinia, and this is sold at an exceedingly cheap rate in Roseires, though it is not imported regularly. It is very soft and very yellow; the natives love it for the making of rings and other ornaments, but as they use it unalloyed it lasts a very short time and rubs off against any substance which touches it. Some of the pebbles in this district are beautifully grained, and there is also a creamy white flint which is not to be seen in other parts of the Sudan. It is very hard, and the best kind of it will cut glass; but I think it is of no real practical value, as it is only to be found in chips lying about the surface of the ground, and is not in paying quantities. The bines which are to be found in the forests here are well worth examining for the purpose of making walking-sticks; they are very strong, and if properly seasoned they make an unusual and attractive stick. One day I struck a mutinous member of my crew with a particularly knotted specimen of these bines; he dragged it out of my hand as I attempted to retain it. He took an unexpected bath the next moment. I had so much satisfaction; but he lived in my memory for many days afterwards.

As the days get warmer and the rains begin falling in the south the usual swarm of insects descends upon Roseires, and attends your dinner-table with clock-like regularity. The flying ant is the worst and most loathsome specimen which you have to contend with; it always strikes you as being so particularly unclean as it crawls into your soup, or

alights on your fork just as you are about to put it in your mouth. But the place is comparatively free from mosquitoes—that is to say, in comparison with some of the other parts of the Sudan. The fact of the banks being high is, of course, a great help in the direction of keeping the number of these insects down; stagnant water is not often to be found, and they have therefore no breeding-places as they have on the White Nile.

To the east of the river there is, however, a famous swampy region called Khor Tub, but as I visited it in the winter time, I do not remember any mosquitoes at all. I do remember the water, though, for I never tasted anything quite like it before or since. It was green. We were a party of four Englishmen, with about a dozen attendants, and we rode out to the Khor for the purpose of hunting the roan antelope, never dreaming but that there would be a sufficiency of water to provide for all our wants. One of the men had been out a week or so before, and reported water in abundance. But the week which had elapsed since his visit had been very hot, and the place was the drinking centre of all the game of that district, with the result that when we arrived there was not a clean drop of water to be found. What there was, went as near crawling as any water I have ever seen. On the way out we had a long gallop after a gazelle, and had then drunk freely of the supply which we carried with us on our saddles, so that we were left practically without water on our arrival. That night, however, was all



right, and a man was immediately sent back to Roseires with instructions to bring a camel load of fresh water out the first thing in the morning. Early tea was abandoned on sight; but we started out, thinking that the messenger could not fail to put in an appearance by the time we returned to breakfast. We had a splendid morning; the trackers found fresh spoor almost directly we left the camp, and in less than an hour we came up with a fine herd of roan. The going was rather bad, as the whole district was pitted with elephant tracks, and the trees were thick in parts. We were gaining rapidly, however, when one of the party, who was just behind me, attempted to cut across by dashing between two trees. There was not sufficient room for his shoulders, and he came out of the saddle backwards with tremendous force. I was pulling up to go to his assistance when he shouted to me that he was all right and that I was to go on, so on I went. I was within some two hundred yards of the herd when I accidentally struck my spear against a tree and lost the head. By the time that I had recovered it I was too late; the herd had escaped, and my horse, full of life during the first gallop, had no idea of going on again at the same pace now that we had once stopped. As it turned out, no one killed that day, but it was an excellent morning all the same.

The roan is by far the most sporting antelope to hunt; it will always turn at the end, and one therefore loses the sense of slaughter which would be felt

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Photo by G. B. Middleton

ROAN ANTELOPE



if the animal hunted was without the instinct of retaliation, as, for instance, the water-buck.

The wart-hog, which is the wild boar of Africa, is also good sport and charges gamely, but it does not give you the run that the antelope does, and it is also much scarcer.

When we returned to camp for breakfast we found, to our dismay, that no water had yet arrived from the Nile, and we were forced to drink the filthy stuff which was the only liquor available. We brewed it into the very strongest tea possible, but even this only went a little way towards destroying its natural flavour. To make matters even harder to bear, one of our party amused himself by giving us a detailed, and I am sure exaggerated, account of the silver streams and splashing waterfalls which he said surrounded his home. He also dilated upon the waste of water in England. "Think of the thousands of people in England at the present moment who are washing their hands in crystal, cool, rushing water," he said; "think of the water springing out of the hydrants into water-carts in the streets of London," and so on. We thought—but it did not seem to improve matters.

Lunch-time came and passed, and still no water arrived. But at about four o'clock I waked from my siesta to hear the welcome sound of iron water reservoirs being detached from a camel's saddle, and two minutes later we were drinking deep of Nile water, with just sufficient whisky to destroy the germs. The man had missed his way the night



before, and had eventually turned up on the bank of the Nile some ten miles north of Roseires.

It was with a very different feeling that we went out for the evening's hunt. We did not find, and returned empty-handed; but the beauty of the country, combined with the constant expectation of a run, and the knowledge that our evening's meal was to be accompanied with good clean water, served to lessen our disappointment at the barrenness of our search for game. But it took some days before the taste of the awful stuff which we had been forced to drink departed; it may have been imagination, but it certainly struck each one of us that the others were looking a greenish yellow, the colour of the liquid we had swallowed.

While I was at Roseires a pilgrim arrived there on his return from Mecca to Hausa Land. He had spent half his life in the pilgrimage when he arrived at this town, and had still some three thousand miles to walk. The whole of the journey, except where the sea intervened, had been accomplished on foot, and he appeared to be exceedingly fit when I saw him. He was very intelligent, a native of Sokoto, and he gave me many interesting details of the game which he had seen in the course of his wanderings. Unfortunately, I did not keep a written record of what he told me, and I have forgotten much of it; but I remember that his conversation was full of interest and that he had had several narrow escapes from death in the course of his walk. He was rather handsome and had wonderful manners, almost those

of an English gentleman. He had, of course, begged his way from the start, and I was glad to find that the people of Roseires responded generously to his call; he left with sufficient provisions and money to keep him going for a fairly long time. He carried no arms at all, but walked with a long staff, which he said was sufficient guard to shield a pilgrim from the attacks of the wildest beasts or men. He was the subject of much interest to my crew on the day of his arrival at the station, when he came on board to pay his respects to the white men; this, he said, was the first thing which he invariably did on arrival at a station where there were Europeans. So fired were my crew with admiration at his pluck in attempting such a long and arduous journey that some of the younger men expressed their determination to start for Mecca immediately the steamer arrived at Khartoum again. However, time had damped their ardour when we at last arrived there, and I do not think that any of them actually started; they had not when I left the country.

The elephant in the Blue Nile Province are scarcely worth shooting; it is very seldom that a good tusker is to be found in a herd. Shortly after I left, an officer who happened to be in the district, went out on a bright moonlight night, to await the coming of the herd to one of their favourite drinking-places on the west bank. A little after midnight they appeared, and, choosing what he considered to be the finest animal, he fired at and wounded it. Following them up, he caught sight of the animal

and fired again, and a few minutes later gave a third shot. The next morning three elephant, all cows, were found to have been mortally wounded by his shots. There is always this danger in shooting by moonlight, even under the glorious moon of the Sudan. Appearances are so very deceptive in the gleamy light, and it is seldom that you can pick the best animal unless you are very close indeed.

I find by looking at my diary that I shot a crocodile nearly every day, but was always unable to recover the body. A larger experience of the reptile has now sown the seeds of a horrible doubt as to the veracity of this statement, and I should be inclined to think—had the sportsman been anyone but myself—that the crocodiles fired at and apparently killed, were, in all probability, not in the plural at all. There is apparently no sport which crocodiles love so dearly as being fired at; they will return day by day with clock-like regularity to any spot where they are fairly certain of being afforded the pleasant sensation of having their scales stroked by a passing bullet, or the least vital part of their anatomy pierced. It amuses man, and it does not hurt them; therefore is everyone pleased.

Taking them all through, the natives of the Blue Nile Province are entirely loyal and useful supporters of the English régime in the country. It is true that this province was the scene of the murder of Mr. Scott-Moncrieff in the year 1908; but even though the first action on the part of the revolutionaries was successful, the majority of the natives of

that district remained loyal to the Government, and were, indeed, instrumental in the capture of some of the leaders of the revolt. In connection with this affair, it is impossible not to regret the action of the Government in giving way to what was, in my opinion, a mistaken act of mercy—the reprieving of so many of the men who had been condemned to death by the court for complicity in a cold-blooded murder. Justice, tempered with mercy, has been the policy of the British Government in all corners of the world; but the Sirdar in granting the reprieve referred to was undertaking a responsibility of which the results will reach further than the corner of the Sudan where the incident occurred. I was in Egypt at the time when the main controversy in regard to the reprieve was going the round of the country, and I am convinced that the moral effect produced was not good. Circumstances alter cases, and whereas this act of leniency might have been productive of nothing but beneficial results at one time, its coming, as it did, shortly after the release of the Denshawi prisoners and the resignation of Lord Cromer, lent it an aspect of weakness in the eyes of the half-educated Egyptian, which materially harassed the work of the English in Egypt.

Shortly after the reprieve had been granted, but while the agitation caused by the utterances of the “Lewa,” then the chief organ of Nationalism in Egypt, was still in progress, I was fortunately able to see the Sirdar on the subject. I must confess that I failed to find in his conversation any adequate



reason for such a drastic sweep of leniency. His Excellency, while naturally reticent in regard to the *dossier* which had been the subject of so much speculation in the native Press regarding the incident, was very kind in giving me all the information in his power. But he offered no definite and convincing reason for the executing of the reprieve. "Enough blood had been spilled," and, in his opinion, "it would not have been wise to carry out the sentences passed by the courts on the particular men whom he had reprieved."

The administration of Sir Reginald Wingate in the Sudan, both as Sirdar and Governor-General, having been so absolutely free from the acts of mistaken and dangerous leniency which are far too common among Englishmen in dealing with natives, the matter escaped condemnation in the English Press at the time, but the whole feeling in Egypt appeared to be that a mistake had been committed. In so far as the Sudan itself was concerned, it is possible that the reprieve was received in the spirit in which it was granted; but, after all, Egypt is so closely connected with the Sudan that the two countries should on occasions like these be considered equally, and if the men were found to be guilty of acts which deserved the death penalty, the finding of the court should have been allowed to stand. Also each individual case must of necessity be treated with a due regard to the future. It is undoubtedly a fact that the rising in this instance had been connived at and approved of by many of the important houses

of the Sudan, and that it was not the individual act of a fanatic. Much, therefore, in regard to the future peace of the country hung upon the manner in which those convicted of open complicity in the affair were treated. The Sudan is, as I have already mentioned, a country young in civilisation; and the principles of administration—if it can be called by such a name—of the former régime is still present in the minds of thousands of our subjects in the country at the present time. It has been proved again and again all over the world that sudden change has a disastrous effect upon the mind of the native; and to introduce the doctrine of a questionable leniency into a country where, in former days, worth was judged entirely from a standpoint of strength and harshness, is neither fair to the inhabitants of the country themselves, or to the men of the future in whose hands the guidance of the people will lie.

We have striking examples of the futility of this method of administration in the Egypt of to-day, where white men are openly defied by their servants, and where outrages upon the lives and property of Englishmen are unfortunately common occurrences. To my mind, this action on the part of Sir Reginald Wingate is the only serious mistake which he has made in his long and successful administration of the country.

In the case of the former Mahdi at Kordofan, which I have already alluded to, letters were seized which proved the complicity of sheikhs of powerful

influence in the Sudan, and it is certain that, had the matter been treated with less severity, the country would not have been so easily reclaimed to a state of peace and security. The decisive action of Colonel Mahan, who captured, tried, and hanged the leader in the short space of a week or so, dealt the death-blow to his party, and the conspiracy collapsed like a pack of cards.

It is almost impossible to foretell the coming of such risings; the spirit of Mahdism is latent in the nature of a very great portion of the population of the Sudan; it is not an active danger, but in the name of religion the people will follow like children in the wake of any strong man who will lead them. This being so, it behoves the Government to act with strength and decision should there be any rising, however small, for, though easily checked in the beginning, there is no telling what would happen in the event of the movement being allowed to spread, and any suspicion of weakness on the part of the Government in dealing with conspirators when captured would be fatal. The Sudanie, far more than the Egyptian, is sensible to justice, but his contempt, in the appalling event of its ever being aroused, would deal immediate death to the carefully woven scheme of civilisation which we have introduced into his country. With every year that passes the danger of a rising of this kind becomes more and more remote. Children are growing up in the appreciation of an orderly and productive administration; men, born in the reign of the bloodthirsty despotism for

which the Mahdi and his Khalifa were responsible, become year by year more sensible to the advantages which the new régime has to offer them, and more inclined to hesitate before throwing away the substance for the shadow. The extension of the railway system will induce freer intercourse between the various tribes, and trade, with its tangible and ever-present advantages, will with every year play a more important part in the lives of the people.

On the Blue Nile now, there are many thriving and prosperous settlements worked entirely by men who were loungers in the streets of Omdurman—without work, hope, or ambition—in the days before the united forces of England and Egypt swept the tyrannous, grinding rule of the Khalifa from the land. These men take the keenest interest in their homes and property; they are very striking examples of the possibilities of the native of the Sudan. It was a hard task to drag them from the life of indolence which possessed them at first, and to banish them from the doubtful delights of the town to a spot where they would be forced to rely upon their own energy for a living; but it was accomplished in the end, with results which the most optimistic might have hesitated to predict.

In the perfect climate with which they are blessed for so many months of the year the inhabitants of this province have a great advantage over the inhabitants of some of the White Nile districts. Near Khartoum, on the White Nile, the land at a distance of a hundred yards or so from the river is



nothing more or less than barren desert ; every inch of cultivation, apart from that right on the banks of the river, has to be irrigated, with a large expenditure of labour and consequent expense. In the provinces of the other river the soil is, for the most part, healthy and productive, and its natural dampness in the upper regions is sufficient to produce at least one crop a year without human aid. Then, when one does reach the fertile lands of the White Nile, the districts are not nearly as healthy as those on the sister river, and also one has to contend with the *seroot* fly in thousands by day, and the mosquito in millions by night. Therefore it is not surprising to find that the Blue Nile Province shows greater signs of civilisation among the natives than that of the White Nile. A stranger passing through on a steamer might think that the towns on the White Nile were larger and ordered in a superior fashion to those of the Blue. There are, of course, larger towns on the borders of the more important river, and their appearance is more striking, as there are usually more English officials stationed in them. But, taking the natives themselves, I am inclined to think that the Blue Nile resident has the advantage in order and energy over his neighbour. Their villages are usually clean, their huts well and strongly built, and their instincts generally lie nearer civilisation than those of the lower White Nile. Of course, in the extreme south of the latter region it has been shown that the natives are merely savages, but I am now referring to those tribes which, apart



Photo by G. B. Middleton

INTERESTED SUDANESE CHILDREN—WHITE NILE

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from the climate and the matter of irrigation, have had equal advantages with the tribes on the other river.

Curiously enough, there is no comparison, as a general rule, in the physiognomy of the Eastern and Western Sudanese. The faces of the savage tribes which inhabit the country to the south of Fashoda, or Kodok, are infinitely more refined and intellectual than the men who are really making extraordinary strides in the direction of an effectual civilisation further north. The negroid type is entirely absent from the southern tribes, but it is by no means unusual among the northern. This fact is due, presumably, to the enormous variety of alien women imported to swell the harems of the Khalifa and his chiefs, and of slaves accumulated during the course of generations. One of the keenest of my gun-bearers was, to all appearances, a thorough negro, but he showed more intelligence than many Egyptians. His eyesight was extraordinary, and I know he must often have inwardly reviled me for my slowness in perceiving an animal which he was vainly attempting to point out. I recollect leaving him behind one afternoon, much to his disgust, and regretting it ever afterwards. I had grown tired of always walking with a native a few yards behind, and as I only intended to go into the woods at the back of my house with the shot-gun for guinea-fowl and partridge, I turned a deaf ear to his entreaties to allow him to follow with the rifle ready for emergencies. I had rather a successful afternoon, and



with the bag at my back almost filled with game, I was on the point of returning home when a covey of partridge passed me, just out of range, and took the ground near some shrubs at almost a hundred yards' distance. I followed up and, getting well within range, I shouted to raise them. Nothing rose, but to my great surprise a dog-like animal came out from behind the shrubs and advanced to meet me. It was large, about the size of a small St. Bernard, with a flat head and black jowl. It stopped for a moment on seeing me, and then advanced steadily. Only having a shot-gun in my hand, and not wishing to wound without killing, I shouted at it, but it took not the slightest notice of me and continued to approach. I waited until it was within ten yards or so, and then fired at its head. It turned then, but without the least appearance of being badly wounded. I had not an idea of what it was at the time, but subsequent inquiry has convinced me that it was nothing more than an African hunting-dog, although these animals had never been seen in the district before. It is also a most unusual thing for one to separate itself from the rest of the pack. They are not often dangerous to human beings, unless ravenous with hunger, when they will attack.

After I left the district a new sport was introduced by one of the English inspectors, who had his head-quarters at Roseires. Accompanied by a few natives, armed like himself with swords only, they would track a herd of elephants in which there were

young, and, after letting the herd wind them, would charge. The mother of the young elephant would naturally drop behind the rest of the herd, and one of the horsemen would gallop past, severing the fetlock of the animal in passing. The moment that this feat was successfully accomplished the beast was shot and the small elephant captured. One of the animals at present in the Zoological Gardens of Cairo was captured in this manner. The sport is naturally very dangerous, for should a horse fall, almost certain death awaits the rider. But the natives of the Sudan are, for the most part, without fear, and love the excitement of the sport; they are a very different race to the Egyptians, who have a great regard for the safety of their own persons.

My favourite camping-place was at a spot on the banks of the river some five or six miles south of Roseires, and on my first visit there I was fortunate in killing a very fine python. I was walking home to lunch at my camp at midday, when I saw the reptile close to the water. I thought it was a crocodile, and was about to fire, when, to my surprise, I saw it turn in towards the land instead of immediately making for the river. I fired, but the bullet went clean over its head, and it increased its speed for the safety of the forest. A second shot, however, was better judged, and I blew the top of its head off. My gun-bearer, hugely excited, immediately stepped forward and took hold of it, but he regretted the action a moment later when the dying reptile wound

round his body with all its remaining force. Fortunately, this was no longer sufficient to do him any injury beyond giving him a terrible fright; and, indeed, it had the same effect upon me. It was some minutes before I could screw up enough courage to touch its loathsome body. It measured over sixteen feet, and its skin was a particularly fine one. Snakes are fairly numerous on the Blue Nile, but during the whole time that I was up in the province I never had one of my men poisoned by a bite, though numbers of them spent the greater part of their time in the forests cutting wood, in places where they would have been most likely to suffer had venomous snakes been numerous in the district. Scorpions are to be found nearly everywhere, and the tarantula spider in a few parts of the Sudan.

Though I did not get a particularly fine head, the shooting of my Tourah hartebeeste was one of the achievements with which I was most pleased; even as it was, I should not have got him but for the energy of the native guide and tracker who was with me at the time. I spotted a herd early in the day as we were marching to join the river to the south, but it was a long time before I got a shot. At length I lay down to steady myself, for the day was exceedingly hot, and I felt at the moment that if I missed now I should be unable to move another half-mile in chase. To my great delight the beast fell to the shot, but my tracker made the mistake of immediately rushing forward; the animal recovered itself and was off like the wind, apparently scarcely



THE  
CAMP



Photo by G. B. Middleton

ON THE WAY TO CAMP





wounded at all. Hope dies hard in cases like this, and, forgetting our weariness, we followed. For a full hour we tracked the wounded beast through thickets and over plains—never, however, getting time for a second shot. At last, after a particularly hard bit of ground, I was forced to admit myself done for the time being; water had been left behind with the donkeys, and I felt that I could go not a step further. But my guide was possessed of greater staying powers, and asked to borrow my rifle and continue the chase himself. I handed him the gun and he was off like the wind, firing blindly in the air as he sped along. I calculated, with deep thankfulness, that in all probability the ammunition in the magazine would be spent before he again turned towards me, as, judging from the way in which he was handling the rifle, it must have been the first time that he had ever had one in his possession. But he never got out of sight; the animal's strength had been spent, and he dropped dead at about five hundred yards from where I was resting. Sanëd, the guide, was overjoyed at his success, and to this day he believes that he had killed it. No one likes to lose the credit of his shot, and I examined the beast closely when I got up to it, but there was not a second shot in its body. I did not point this out to the sportsman who had, at the least, done his best, and I freely admit that had it not been for him I should never have secured it, for I could not have gone on had all the forces of the Mahdi at the height of his power been at my back. As it was, I shall

never forget my weariness as I marched back to the river, wet through with perspiration, parched with thirst, and decidedly hungry into the bargain—I thought that we would never reach the water. As a general rule, I never left a path to follow an animal without carrying a water-bottle with me, but on this occasion I had, for some reason or another, left it behind. I never smoked while shooting except in the early morning, immediately after a kill, or on the return journey. When I came up to the animal this time, therefore, I lit a cigarette mechanically, forgetting for the moment that I had no water, and the smoke materially increased my thirst. Sanēd offered me some gum to chew, but it did not have the desired effect at all; I think it made me more thirsty than before. When at last we did come to the denser forest which marked the borderland of the river, new life seemed to be given me. The scenery was incomparably beautiful; it was about five miles south of Roseires on the west bank. We marched down a game track which ran through thickets of the most gorgeous verdure; the small grey monkey of the country gambolled overhead among the trees, and now and again we could catch a glimpse of the palm trees which lined the river in the distance. Then we lost them, and for some time I fancied that we must have inadvertently mistaken the path, when we suddenly mounted a small hillock, and there at our feet lay the shining, life-giving Nile itself. I could not wait; heedless of my guide's warning cry of crocodiles, I walked straight into the

river till I was waist high in the waters ; then I stooped and drank.

True to his traditions—he had never been known to mistake his way—my guide had led me to the very spot where I had arranged for the camp to be pitched, and five minutes after my bath I was enjoying a lunch such as Mohammed alone could prepare in the wilderness. Then in the shade of a giant tree I lay and read, and smoked until sleep overcame me, to wake at about five o'clock, refreshed and invigorated, when I made a short excursion with my shot-gun before darkness fell on the land.

Curiously enough, one of my most successful trips was also one of my shortest. I had frequently been out a week at a time into good game country, and got nothing worth speaking of ; and I therefore began to fear that I should have to leave the district before shooting the much-coveted koodoo. However, one morning I started out, and my luck was good from the very beginning. I shot a gazelle on the way to the place where I had decided to camp for the night ; and in the cool of the evening I went down along the river-bank on the possible chance of meeting some animals either going to or from the river. Just as I was beginning to give it up I noticed a fresh spoor leading to the water. It was that of a roan antelope, a specimen of the antelope tribe I had hitherto been unsuccessful in obtaining. I followed it down right to the water's edge, where it turned again to the forest. I was evidently too late ; the animal had drunk. But as I was returning along



the beach I suddenly saw a fine roan bull emerge from the forest about five hundred yards from where I stood, and advance towards me. It was impossible to find any cover, as the beach at this point was very wide, so I lay flat on my face, motioning to my gun-bearer to do the same. Fortunately, there was no wind from us, so the beast came on until I bagged him at easy range. He proved to be a very fine specimen of his species, and I went to bed thoroughly satisfied.

The next morning my servant overslept himself, with the result that I was awake and dressed long before breakfast was ready. I determined not to start for the day's shoot without food, so I took my rifle, and went into the forest to stroll about until the meal had been prepared, telling my boy I would be back in ten minutes. I had scarcely walked a thousand yards when, right across the path, ahead of me, I saw two young koodoo bulls, fighting. I could scarcely believe my eyes. Here to my hand was the very animal which I had walked mile after mile to shoot, without ever having a shot at one. I got the biggest of the two, but he was, unfortunately, a very small specimen, his horns only measuring just over thirty-six inches. However, it was better than nothing, and I returned to Roseires that evening in high spirits. I was more glad still when, some three weeks later, I found that I had to return to Khartoum.

The river had sunk steadily lower and lower as the time went on ; rains had been reported from the south for some days, though no effect of this was evident at the point where we were stationed, and

THE  
MIDDLETONS  
AND  
THEIR  
KODAKS



MR. MIDDLETON WITH ONE OF HIS KODOOS



there seemed to be every prospect of a low Nile. Then one night we went to bed with the river as usual; the boat was lying at the bottom of a high bank; half-way up the bank we had a thriving vegetable garden, and from the windows of our house it was impossible to see even the top of the steamer's mast. When I waked the next morning I fancied for a moment that I was the victim of an hallucination, for there opposite the door of the house swung the steamer on her anchor. The flood had come at last, and the water had risen metres in about eight hours. The first rise is known as the "false" rise, and invariably subsides within a day or two of its appearance. It is the flood generated by the first deluge in the hills of Abyssinia, advance falls which precede the regular deluge that eventually gives life to Egypt. The river then falls for about a fortnight, when the steady rise of the Nile begins. The dark brown flood which follows the clear blue rise of the Nile in Egypt is that of the Blue Nile, and, spread over the face of the country, it leaves a fertilising sediment which is the redemption of the land. The waters of the White Nile are, on the other hand, useful only for purposes of irrigation, and were Egypt to rely solely upon the latter river, the land would speedily become barren, or, at least, much less fertile than it is at present. The Blue Nile flood comes down between the comparatively narrow banks with tremendous swiftness, and the coming of the gurgling, rushing waters, is an impressive sight.

In connection with the coming of this flood, I



remember once being out on a shooting expedition about the time when the flood was expected, and camping in a dried-up channel of the river for the night. At daybreak I was waked suddenly by my servant, who shook me roughly, telling me that the waters were almost upon us. The camp was awake, and already the men were busy loading the donkeys, and collecting their own and my belongings. Away to the south we could hear a dull roar, as of many waters gradually approaching, and we all had an anxious few minutes until at last we were high and dry, out of the reach of the highest flood. We must have looked a party of fools when the cause of the roar became apparent. Instead of a rush of water at our feet, the sky grew darker, and over our heads, flying in the direction of the river, came millions of small birds going for their annual holiday to the north. I should be afraid to estimate the numbers which passed in a steady stream while we watched, and for the rest of the day, stragglers which had been left behind the main body of emigrants passed wearily down the course after their swifter brethren. They fly quickly, but rest fairly often; and it must be a very bad time for the insects which inhabit the spots where these rests take place. Hundreds of these birds fall dead of exhaustion yearly, during their long flights through the tropics, but thousands again reach their destination safely, and return with the winter. It was a most wonderful sight, and it impressed me as much as anything which I saw in the Sudan.

Were the birds of the Sudan to be entirely destroyed the country would speedily become impossible to live in ; even as it is, the insect life is one of its greatest drawbacks. At certain seasons of the year an enormous variety sweep the land like a scourge ; some are poisonous, and all are objectionable in the highest degree. The dread terror of sleeping-sickness has been traced to a poison injected by a fly ; malaria fever is, of course, carried by mosquitoes ; and, for the rest, even if they do no actual harm, they effectually worry the unfortunate human who meets them to such an extent that his life is hardly worth living at times.

When the flood begins in the spring, the natives of the upper regions of the Blue Nile prepare for their journey to the north, with whatever produce is considered worth the taking. They build rafts of a light, pithy wood, which abounds on the banks of the river, and placing their goods upon this, they mount on top of it and put out to sea. The journey is often a perilous one, for it is very difficult to steer this sort of craft, and rocks and shoals are plentiful. However, in fair water, and with a current of some ten miles an hour, the journey to Khartoum does not take a very long time, and the mode of progression has one great advantage : there are no fares to pay.

With the rising of the waters, everything springs into life and activity at once, and the river scenes are most picturesque. I have, in some cases, seen as many as thirty rafts on one reach of the swollen waters at the same time, each with its steersman,

and sometimes with his family as well, perched on top of the goods which are being borne swiftly to the markets of the north. One of the greatest differences between the natives of the Sudan and the natives of Egypt is that the former seem to be possessed of an inherent desire for change and travel, while the latter are content to remain year after year in their own villages, and will not move if they can possibly avoid it, even though the advantages of travel are obviously great. I never knew a Sudanese servant who did not beg his master to take him to England when he went on leave; I never knew an Egyptian servant who did not raise difficulties if the proposal was mooted. It is only natural, therefore, that the Sudanese are already obtaining a larger knowledge of the world, and of the peoples of the world, than are the average Egyptians, and the latter will have to work very hard to keep apace with the progress made by the natives of the despised south. .



Photo by G. B. Middleton

SPOTTED HYENA





## CHAPTER XII

### MILITARY AND CIVIL OFFICIALS

IN an earlier chapter of this book, I have briefly referred to the fact that at the time of my arrival in the Sudan, the country was subject to an administration entirely military. This régime lasted for a considerable time, until at last the peaceful state of the country appeared to warrant the gradual introduction of civil officials to replace the soldiers who had been occupying administrative posts. No one will question the wisdom of the decision ; it was certainly a right and proper one in every way. But even under the able administration and watchfulness of the Sirdar and Governor-General, the change was in some cases introduced too suddenly, and in my opinion the country suffered therefrom.

An English barrister was sent for and installed at Khartoum, and immediately the iron rule of the soldiers was replaced by one which almost seemed to seek for cases, in which Englishmen and Europeans generally should be made to suffer for offences against the natives in the newly instituted courts. I remained in the country during the whole of the first period of change, and it was a remarkable one.

It will have been seen, from what has already been written, that the average Sudanie was more or less

of a savage, docile and amenable enough it may be, but still a savage, when England and Egypt took possession of his country after the battle of Omdurman.

It is not difficult, then, to imagine the effect which a newly introduced and entirely strange code of law would have upon the minds of these people, who, not five years before, looked upon leniency of treatment as weakness, and upon might as right. Shortly before I left the country, an Englishman, holding a responsible Government appointment in the capital, was brought before the English judge in court on the charge of having ill-treated his servant. It was proved that the assault had been committed; the boy had perpetrated some breach of discipline which, in his master's opinion, justified the slight chastisement which was accorded him. The Englishman was fined ten piastres for the offence, and the servant was ruined for service for all time. Now, whatever personal views one may hold as to the respective advantages or disadvantages of corporal punishment, it must be admitted that a case such as this, coming immediately on the top of strict military rule which employed the old-time punishment of flogging, could not but be detrimental to our interests in the country.

Even in our own country to-day, it is at times considered necessary to resort to the use of the cat, a lawful method of punishment far more severe than the flogging of the natives in the Sudan. If then, in a land of our boasted civilization, we have not yet found any efficient substitute for the personal

chastisement of olden days, how more than necessary is it that its abandonment, in the Sudan, should be brought about with infinite caution, in order to avoid the danger of the native imagining that he has the law more or less in his own hands? The natives themselves do not look upon their kind as being the equal of the white man. It is true that some of the missionaries do their best to impress upon the black and yellow races that they are in every particular our equals, having the same rights and the same feelings; but the native, in his elemental state at least, knows better. When, however, he *suddenly* finds that it is in his power to goad the white man, his former master and friend, into striking him, and then to obtain financial redress, it is a dangerous moment for the country.

I remember hearing of one case in which the tourist, the pernicious Paget M.P. tourist, who goes about the world doing the British flag all the harm he can in every country, had interfered. One of the *reises* on a river steamer had been refractory, and in the end he had deliberately disobeyed orders. He was taken up on to the deck, and awarded a richly-deserved "twenty of the best." Unfortunately Mr. Paget appeared at the top of the companion-way at about the eighteenth stroke. He fumed with rage. So this was the manner in which the poor brother black man was treated by Englishmen abroad. Words were inadequate to express his indignation. The whole of Europe, ay, and the whole of America, should ring with the infamy of it all, when he, the saviour



of the traditions of his country, should return from his travels. Then came what, in my opinion, was a mistake on the part of the Government officials of the Sudan. They slurred the thing over, and gave this irate and ignorant globe-trotter what in effect amounted to an apology. I consider that this was a decidedly ill-advised course to take. Flogging in that particular case was necessary ; the Government should have held to their guns, and refused to allow any man like this, who actually knew less than nothing of the native character, and of the different conditions which prevail in the Sudan as opposed to England, the satisfaction of having his words attended to at all. The matter should have been explained to him, and then, if he failed to understand, he could have done what he liked—and no one would have been any the worse for it.

At the present moment there is some dissatisfaction expressed in certain official quarters as to the treatment meted out by the civil administration at Khartoum to some of the officials in the provinces, who are entirely responsible for the good behaviour of the natives in the districts wherein they serve. I quote a case which was mentioned to me in the early months of the present year. A theft had been committed in one of the outlying provinces, and the English Inspector, perhaps rather over-zealous in his attempt to capture the thief, arrested a man upon whom, at the time, the gravest suspicion rested, though no actual proof was to hand at the time. Some delay, unavoidable I am told, occurred in the

trial, and at length the man was sent to Khartoum. The evidence, though it all went to prove the man's guilt, was not sufficient to obtain his condemnation. He was finally acquitted, and *publicly informed by an English Judge* that the Inspector who had been responsible for his arrest was entirely on the wrong side of the law in having acted as he had done, and that he would be informed of his error by the Court.

The delighted man returned hot haste to his village, and in the face of the people informed the Inspector of what had been said, and openly defied him to take any further steps in the matter.

This is certainly a case in which the absurdity of applying the law as it is in civilized countries to a land like the Sudan must be evident to all. Imagine the position which the Inspector will hold in the eyes of the natives whom he is called upon to govern in the future. He has been publicly disgraced, and every man in the province knows it. He had acted as he thought best in the interests of the country which he had been engaged to serve, and this is the result. It will be said by many that it is impossible to have two laws, and this is, of course, correct in theory. Such a state of things would be impossible. But there was absolutely nothing to prevent the Inspector being told of his error privately, and should he have erred in the same direction on a second occasion, he could have left the country. But what possible good does the Judge imagine that he has achieved by his public condemnation of the Inspector in Court? Does he think that it can in any round-

about way strengthen the prestige of the British administration in the Sudan ? Does he dream that such an avowal will be the cause of less wrongdoing among the natives of the district in which the accused man and his Inspector dwelt ? What is it that makes our English civilians commit such appalling errors of judgment ? Were they lesser men one could imagine that it was done with the idea of obtaining a sort of cheap gratitude from the natives whom they favour. But if, indeed, this is the case, they hopelessly fail in their ambitions, since the man who errs in favour of a native against one of his own countrymen is immediately branded as a " magnoon " (madman) by the very man whom he has favoured, as well as by the rest of his kind. No one will deny the necessity for entirely transferring the rule of the country from military to civil hands eventually, but I, in common with most men who have lived for any length of time in the country, am strongly opposed to any haste in the proceeding. The military man has frequently specific knowledge which is inadequate to the position which he holds, but on the other hand he has been learning the rule of an iron discipline since the first day of his military training, and there is nothing which is so calculated to turn the black savage into a respectable and hard-working citizen as discipline.

The method employed by Sir Reginald Wingate in the draughting of a thoroughly sound class of young English civilians to go through the mill as deputy, sub, and finally, fully qualified inspectors, with the intention of ultimately giving them posts as

Governors of the various provinces is, without doubt, the best one which it would be possible to employ.

The men arrive in the country fresh from college, or from a term of special training, which includes a thorough course of Arabic. They take positions under men—usually soldiers—who have been serving in the Sudan for many years, and who have a thorough practical knowledge of the land and people. The result is a man who knows the native thoroughly, who can not only speak the native language well, but can also read and write it. When the time comes for him to take the reins of government in his own hands he will be a specialist in his job, thanks to his early training; he will possess a truer knowledge of administration than the soldier whom he supersedes, and what is lost with the uniform and military discipline will be compensated for by an increased efficiency. But had the Government acted with haste, had one soldier been moved at the beginning to make place for a civilian who was not in every way fitted for his post, an almost irreparable harm would have been done to the new administration at its very formation. There are at present two civil Mudirs or Governors, in the Sudan; though one of these, Mr. Butler, having served with the Egyptian Army, with the rank of Bey, perhaps hardly counts as a civilian in the native mind.

There is another point which is much discussed at times concerning the military and civil elements of administration in the Sudan. I have heard it said times without number, and I have seen letters



of complaint more than once in the local papers of Egypt to the same effect, that the military element in the country looks down upon the world of civil officialdom. I served the Government as a civilian for several years in the Sudan, during which time I met all sorts and conditions of officers of the British Army, and civilian employés of the Egyptian Government, and the conclusions I arrived at in regard to the general relationship existing between the two elements, do not seem to justify the constant complaints of which we hear. I am speaking generally, and of what I consider can be taken as an average. In certain cases, noticeably those of young officers who ranked as sub-lieutenants at home, and who come out to the Sudan with the rank and title of Majors in the Egyptian Army, it is true that they give way to what is known as "side," and are, indeed, rather objectionable characters. But in fair play to these youngsters, it is only right to say that it usually gets knocked out of them before they have been in the country for many months, and they end up by being as easy to get on with officially as socially.

I can only recall one case of an officer holding the rank of Captain who could be classed fairly as a snob, and he was one of the worst description. But there is an excuse even for him. He belonged to a regiment which does not, perhaps, take quite such a high standing in the British Army as certain others; though to be a commissioned man in any regiment of His Majesty's Army is in itself an honour of which any man might justly be proud. He was the sort of

person who would be on the best of terms for months with a civilian of low ranking in the Government, provided that there was no one by to see. Then you would meet him among his elect, and you would be surprised to hear "Mr." tacked on to your name and to note the care with which he avoided your eye. But with the exception of this fair-haired gentleman, I do not recall any other case at all where the military spirit has seen fit to lord it over the civilians. As regards social affairs, I should say that if the military and civil employés of the Government are more or less apart and distinct, as some of the latter complain is the case, there is absolutely no reason why it should be otherwise. As a general rule a man prefers the company of another who has some of the same interests to talk over with him. It is, after all, a poor compliment that the complaining civilian pays to his fellows in Khartoum, when he is constantly lamenting the fact that all his friends are not military. If the latter are sufficient unto themselves, why not the former ?

One of the first departments to be handed over to civilian control was the medical, which had hitherto been purely military. A doctor was brought out from England, and placed in charge of what was called the Sudan Civil Medical Department, all the doctors on the staff of which were civilians. The doctor who stood at the head of the department was undoubtedly a very clever man at his work, and had taken the best degrees which it was possible for him to hold in his profession, while his assistants

were, one and all, good men. As professional men, they were probably ahead of the R.A.M.C. which they superseded, but the manner in which the department was run gave a striking example of the inefficiency of men thus introduced into a country which was absolutely strange to them, to organise and carry out an effective control.

In the old days I had been for some considerable time an inmate of the military hospital in Omdurman, which had been converted to this purpose as soon as the ladies of the Khalifa's harem had been dislodged from the building. During the whole of the time I spent in this place I never had the slightest cause for complaint; the servants were soft-footed and attentive, and one's own servant was always permitted to be at hand in case he was required. At the first glimmer of dawn, tea, if one was allowed it, or other drink, was brought in, and one's friends could visit one at whatever time was convenient to them, except, of course, when the doctor was in actual attendance.

At a later date it was my ill-fortune to be sent to the new civil hospital at Khartoum. The latter building was infinitely more comfortable than the former; it was fitted with broad, cool verandahs, and the rooms were lofty and airy. Nevertheless, I would much prefer to spend a week in the old hospital, under the old treatment, than a day and a night in the new, under the code of arrangements introduced, apparently, direct from some of the hospital wards of London. It was, perhaps, not

entirely the doctors' fault that everything they did seemed purposely designed to annoy one; they had come fresh into the country, carrying the lessons of hospital discipline they had learnt in London to the tropics of the Sudan; they did their best, but it was a bad best for the unfortunate patient who came under their charge. Presumably tea is not served until 7 a.m. in the hospitals of London; I know that it was not served until that hour in the Sudan. My nights were spent in a perpetual state of semi-delirium, which lasted till the rising dawn, when it would be replaced by an intense desire for the early cup of tea, which is always the first thing one thinks about in the Sudan. The first morning I called the servant and ordered it. He looked at me as though only half understanding, but went away, as I thought, to fetch it. After a prolonged interval of waiting, I called again, and repeated my request. Then he told me that it was never brought to patients until seven o'clock—hours after the first heat of the day had settled down upon the land—and so I waited. That first morning of waiting is among the most painful of my recollections of the Sudan. It was then only just after five o'clock, and for two mortal hours I lay and twisted and turned on my bed, parched with thirst, unable to drink water, as it was against the doctor's orders, unable to obtain tea for the same reason! My own boy was not due to come that morning until eight o'clock, so I had no hope of relief, for the sacred rules of the institution were not to be altered to suit the whim of a patient.



Another rule introduced was to the effect that friends could not visit a patient until the afternoon, so the morning was passed in utter solitude, except for the few minutes that it took to clean the room, and for the visit of the doctor, who, by the way, also forbade me to smoke, not for reasons of health, but because it interfered with his established rules. I never obeyed this injunction ; I never made the slightest pretence of doing so ; it was the last straw. When the afternoon came and brought with it any of your friends, you knew that, in coming to you, they were giving up their much-looked-forward-to game of polo, cricket, or tennis, whereas they might have snatched a few minutes in the morning without any difficulty. I hear that the system is altered again now, and of this I am truly thankful, for the sake of the other sick men who must follow into the hospital at Khartoum. The régime instituted by the well-meaning but narrow-minded officialdom of the young English doctors was as cruel as it was unnecessary, and it could surely have done no good to the patient. A friend of mine, who had been in that hospital nearly two years after I left the country, recently told me of the troubles he had had when within its walls. The attendant who was told off to wait on him was a heavy-footed, clumsy black, who in some extraordinary manner managed to kick or shove the patient's bed every time he passed it. After bearing it for as long as was possible, he made an official complaint to the head of the hospital, and was informed that it was impossible to alter the state of

things, since if the man was remonstrated with he would probably be annoyed, and would leave, and the difficulty of obtaining men for hospital work was very great! Later, the same man was seen, by the patient's servant, gulping down tea out of the cup which was on its way to his master. Complaint was again made, and after many delays in the inquiries which followed, the doctor came to the conclusion that the servant "*might have had a grudge against the other, and have invented the tale in order to get him into trouble.*" So nothing was done.

Innumerable instances might be given to show the completeness of the folly which attempts to make the same rules apply in the Sudan as in England; but the foregoing will be sufficient to prove the failure which attended the attempt in this particular case. The same thing applies in departments which more largely affect the nation. Hospital troubles only affect those who have the misfortune to be sent there, but in other cases, where the same sort of thing happens in regard to questions which affect even a small province, the evil of failure permeates the entire community, and acts as a drag upon the march of effective civilisation. On the other hand, the doctors of this civil corps are, one and all, hard-working and thoroughly capable men, and they are the adored of the natives. The trust which the average Sudanie showers upon the English medicine-man is almost pathetic at times. I have seen women deformed, or men in the last stages of incurable diseases which have been eating into their vitals

for the greater part of their miserable lifetime, fight and squabble in order to obtain the attention of the doctor when he appears in their district. If faith were indeed a cure, as Christian Scientists would have us believe, then there would be unbounded miracles performed in the Egyptian Sudan. I have seen a kindly young doctor, unable to resist the appeal in the eyes of an aged woman born with a deformed hand, examine it with the closest attention, and give her a bottle of some harmless physic, in order to cheer her failing days. She departed comforted, and the dusk of her life was bright with hope and trust.

But, on the other hand, the majority of the Sudanese do not trust the Egyptian doctor, clever though he may be, and, indeed, usually is. They always carefully preserve the medicine proffered, until such time as they may show it to an Englishman, be he a colonel or a coal-heaver, and ask him whether it is well to take it. In some ways they have the trusting simplicity of childhood, and, thank God, their trust in the Englishman has never, to my knowledge, been openly violated. There are three characteristics which the natives affirm we possess. We have neither religion, nor fear, neither can we tell a lie. The first of these attributes we have, of course, gained because we do not pray openly before men at stated times of the day, as the Mohammedans do, neither do we conform to any of the outward ceremonies such as they have been accustomed to see ; the other two, let us hope, we deserve.

## CHAPTER XIII

### SUPERSTITIONS AND CUSTOMS

**I**N all Eastern countries, the native hakims, or doctors, play a very important part, and the Sudan is no exception to this rule. The belief which the average Sudanie had in the medical knowledge of these men was formerly enormous. Numbers of them were nothing more than smart quacks, possessing no actual knowledge of disease and its treatment at all, but some were, on the other hand, familiar with a great variety of herbs and roots which were possessed of healing properties.

In the "Third Report of the Wellcome Research Laboratories at the Gordon Memorial College at Khartoum," edited by the Director, Dr. Andrew Balfour, M.D., B.SC., F.R.C.P., D.P.H., etc., a most interesting account of the former practice of medicine in the Sudan is given by Bimbashi R. G. Anderson, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., R.A.M.C.; the P.M.O. of the Egyptian Medical Corps at Kordofan, and others.

In the chapters contributed by Bimbashi Anderson, some of the principal superstitions of the natives of the Kordofan district are treated with exhaustively, and it will be evident to all who read it, how very difficult was the task of the English who had to



alienate the minds of the inhabitants from their former superstitions before medical science could be applied to them with any success. The belief in the evil eye, and in the eternal presence of a host of evil spirits, who are perpetually at hand to do harm to those people who are not in possession of charms to ward off their attentions, is firmly fixed in the native mind. This belief has been the cause of great wealth to the " holy men " of the Sudan for generations.

I have myself witnessed the operation undertaken to expel an evil spirit from the heart of a woman supposed to be possessed, though it was difficult to follow exactly what happened from the distance at which I had necessarily to remain from the scene of the operation. One thing, however, impressed me greatly, and that was the rough treatment which it was apparently necessary to give the body in order that the soul might be relieved. At a particularly resounding yell on the part of the unfortunate woman, my boy informed me that the holy men were putting salt in her eyes, in order to make things a little more uncomfortable for the lurking devil. It evidently had the desired effect, for a few moments later, when the operation was about to be repeated, the lady sprang up, shouting that the spirit had left her, and the rest of the afternoon was spent in rejoicing. I noticed, too, that it was a curious fact that these evil spirits were much more prone to take refuge in the heart of a woman than of a man, and I could not but wonder whether the pain of the ejection might

not have acted as a stimulant to the man in forcing him to repel the attacks of any wandering spirits which might happen to be about.

When one comes to consider the appalling ignorance regarding medical matters which prevailed in the Sudan prior to the coming of the English, it cannot fail to strike one as being wonderful that so many of the tribe were left alive. In many cases maladies would yield to the herbal treatment of the doctors, but in cases of more serious disease, the native appears to have been without any knowledge which might be turned to good account, and what knowledge he had was indeed calculated to do more harm than good. The *garad*, which is the fruit of the sunt tree (*Acacia arabica*), is perhaps the most universally used medicine in the Sudan, and is applied to all sorts of diseases. When in doubt, use the *garad*, appears to have been the motto of the hakims. The faith cure, which is one of the main principles of the doctrine known as Christian Science, was also one of the main doctrines of the Sudanese. An intercessor, one of the holy men of the sick man's district, was sought after, and large sums of money were paid for his prayers and incantations. There are many men in the Sudan at the present time who have spent the greater portion of their lives waiting in absolute faith for cures, which would have been miraculous indeed had they taken place.

Many of these men have been cured at the hands of British and Egyptian surgeons, and little by little the faith in the men who had previously lived on the

credulity of the suffering natives is diminishing. The people, at least in the more remote districts, were children in the hands of the clever and unscrupulous men who had somehow earned a reputation of holiness. There are innumerable instances of this; of men who have regularly paid tribute of more than half their earnings to the holy man in the hope of being relieved of some disease; of women who would give their last possession in order to avert the evil eye of a supposed witch, or to obtain the prayers of the holy against the onslaughts of these evil spirits which are never inactive in their midst. And though the native has proved himself to be ready to accept the skill of the trained doctors who have arrived in the country, it will take years to destroy the power of the old superstitions in relation to disease which have become so firmly rooted in their minds. It is hard to find anything that is too great a tax upon their credulity, and it is not likely that the holy men will lose any opportunity of fostering, to the greatest extent in their power, the beliefs which have filled their pockets so well in the past.

A volume might easily be filled with descriptions of the various charms in common use among the Sudanese.

A striking instance of superstition, in which an Egyptian officer was its victim, came directly under my notice the first time that I went as far as Kenessa, the old Catholic Mission station on the White Nile, south of the sudd. Some weeks before I left Khartoum, a party of woodcutters had been sent up to the

station; they were for the most part the scum of Omdurman, men who would neither work nor conform to the laws of the land. They were sent up under the charge of an Egyptian officer and a small armed picket. For the first few weeks all went well, but the officer, terrified out of his life by the responsibility which lay upon his shoulders, treated the men more as masters than as prisoners, with the result that things speedily took a very nasty turn, and in the end the party mutinied. He attempted to get them to work by gentle persuasion, but failed ignominiously, with the result that the next day—the morning of the day upon which I arrived at the station—the men had cut their chains and escaped under the very noses of the guard. The officer, he was only a youngster, came on board in tears when the steamer stopped: “Allah witness, he had done all that was possible to prevent the trouble. He had treated the prisoners as brothers.”

It was some time before I could get at the rights of the case, and then I asked why the soldiers of the guard, or the officer himself, had not fired. He turned a mournful face to me. “What would have been the use of wasting ammunition? Every man of the party was wearing charms which would render them impervious to rifle-shot or sword-thrust!”

Now it is impossible to actually blame the man for his adherence to a belief which had been drilled into his mind since he was first able to think at all, but it reveals a rather pitiful state of affairs if officers of the Egyptian army are to hold such views as this.



There is not the slightest doubt but what this same man would have fought like a lion in the tightest corner, had there been a British officer present to set him the example of courage ; all he lacked was the initiative to break down the barriers of superstition in which he had become enmeshed.

Again, to give an example of superstition among the Sudanese themselves, I found a startling case of it in one of my servants, who was the last man of his race whom I should have expected to have retained it. In every other respect he was quite the most enlightened of the illiterate Sudanese that I came across, but even he was not impervious to the alluring charm of superstition.

I had shot a crocodile, and the boy came and begged me to give him the four claws of the reptile. This was before the men had brought it on board from the bank on which it lay dead, and in making his request the lad added that should it prove to be a female he should not require the claws, but only if it were a full-grown male. I cross-questioned him as to the reason why he was so keen on acquiring them, and bit by bit I got at the truth of the story. He had recently been married, and was living in the hopes of becoming a father at no very distant date, and he wished to obtain the claws in order to attach them to the wrists and ankles of his wife before the child was born. Were this done, and suitable incantations pronounced, the boy, should it prove to be a man child, would be born with both the strength and the cunning of the crocodile. Some-



Photo by G. B. Middleton

CROCODILE ON GUN-BOAT



times, he assured me with the greatest faith, when the charm had acted the most successfully, the boy would be born with webbed hands, something similar to the foot of a crocodile. He was rather inclined to be hurt at the manner in which I received his news, and hastened to inform me that he could bring me a dozen children with webbed hands from his own village in order to prove the truth of his assertion. I expressed a great desire to meet them, but though on several subsequent occasions I reminded him of this offer, luck was never in his way, and the particular children were always away in some distant part of the Sudan when he visited his village!

Again, on a later occasion, he told me with all the simplicity of a great and unquestioning belief, of the wonderful things which had happened to a small boy, a cousin of his. There was no superstition in this tale, and I give it simply as an instance of the remarkable credulity of his race.

In some parts of the Sudan the inhabitants capture cranes by digging a pit of a sufficient depth to take a small boy. He waits, half smothered by a carpet of leaves above his head, until such time as a crane deems fit to advance to taste of the food which is liberally spread about in the vicinity of the boy. Then, when it is near enough, the lad snatches at its leg and holds tight, until others from the village come to kill it and release him of his charge. According to Mohammed, his small cousin spent many a weary hour in this wise, and captured many birds for his family, until one day the end was disaster.



He had, as usual, been placed in his pit, his head covered with leaves, and after a very short wait one of the biggest cranes which had ever been seen approached him. He grabbed at the bird's leg, and got a firm hold, yelling in the meanwhile in the usual manner for assistance from the village. But just as the eager relief party appeared on the scene, the bird made a strenuous effort to rise, and so great was its strength that it raised the boy from his pit, and the last thing that his horrified relations saw of him at the time, was that he was being swiftly carried away in a northerly direction, still clinging bravely to the bird's leg.

This part of the performance my boy assured me was seen by half the inhabitants of the village, the rest was imparted to him by his cousin himself, so that there could be no possible doubt as to the truth of the story! After flying for some miles, hanging on as best he might to the leg of the giant bird, the boy began to tire, and at length succeeded in raising himself, inch by inch, to its back, where he rode in comfort, seated astride behind the wings. Just as the sun set the bird began to swoop down towards earth, and eventually landed the lad in a wonderful city, where the maids were as the houris promised for the Mohammedan's paradise, and where there was never want, or cold, or sand-storms. At first the lad was pleased, and he was treated as a prince by the people, but as time went on he began to weary of his long sojourn from home, and each night would mount to the roof of the palace in which he was living, and

strain his eyes in the direction in which he imagined his home to be. Then, one night, as his yearning for the village of his people grew almost insupportable, the crane appeared and stood beside him on the roof, invitation in its attitude.

Once more the boy mounted his flying machine, and the next morning he was safely landed in the village of his birth, but when he turned to fetch food for the crane it had disappeared, and was never seen again. But to this day no cranes are caught by small boys of that village, and the disused pits are filled with sand.

This story was told to me with many ejaculations to Allah to witness its truth, and I honestly think that my servant had come to believe it, though whether from the fact that he had probably told that tale to select gatherings some hundreds of times, or whether he had believed it from the first, I am unable to say. The days of the "Arabian Nights" come very near to one on occasions like these; when you can succeed in inducing the natives to sink the prejudices of race and creed and indulge in the telling of stories such as are told night after night to interested crowds in every place where the natives foregather.

There is something enormously attractive in the simplicity of such beliefs, and it is impossible to subdue an occasional pang of regret that it has all to go in obedience to the dictates of practical common sense; to be ultimately crushed out of existence altogether by the rolling wheels of civilisation.

The professional story-teller still reaps a comfortable living by his art, and it is not likely that he will soon pass away, since even with the growth of education, and the consequent increase in the number of those who can read and write, the imaginings of these people will retain their hold upon the masses for many years to come.

Speaking of them generally, I should say that the Sudanese are a romantic race. A great number of them live almost entirely in the unknown regions of their dreams, where there are no mosquitoes, and where their needs are attended to by innumerable houris of incomparable beauty. In speaking of beauty, it is a curious fact that the average man of the country can see no attraction in our most beautiful women until he has had time to overcome the strangeness of colour. The women, too, are just the same in the more isolated portions of the country, where white men are not common. Indeed, the women, especially those who have not seen many white men, regard them with feelings of repulsion, no matter how handsome they may be considered according to the European standard. I recollect once meeting two women from one of the interior villages of the south. They stood and regarded my party—one of the men with me was strikingly handsome—with the most infinite disgust, and eventually, after a prolonged scrutiny, they turned away with the ejaculation, “*Ugh! Abyaad.*” The first word is equally expressive in English; the second means “white.” But it does not take a long time to accustom them





Photo by Captain H. Channer





to the colour, and then they greatly appreciate being spoken to by a white man. They are very outspoken in their admiration, and I was told on many occasions by women of the country that I "had a neck like a gazelle." Wearing no collar, and with a somewhat abnormally long neck, it took some time to realise that their compliments were not sarcastic, but I think that they really meant what they said, and I rejoice accordingly.

The two chief features in a man which have the greatest attraction for them are size and strength ; this is, of course, very natural, for until recently it was only the strong man who succeeded in life, the weak had to take what was left to him, with thankful heart, or go without anything at all.

Children, especially boys, have a glorious time, and are the adored of all. There is nothing which a Sudanese father will not do for his son, and the wonder is that they are not all hopelessly spoilt, but I do not ever remember seeing a boy who was the worse for the petting he received, or the licence which he was granted. They are, boys and girls alike, remarkably well-behaved as a rule, and one very seldom hears them crying. On one occasion when I left Khartoum for the south, a small girl aged about eight or ten years came on board, thinking that we were going to Omdurman only. The mistake was not discovered by anyone until we were some miles on our journey, and I did not hear of it until we were nearly at Fashoda, when I happened to notice that the child did not appear to belong to

anyone in particular. She had sat on the barge we were towing for some hours, waiting for Omdurman, then, when she discovered her mistake, she decided, with all the philosophy of her race, that it was no good crying now that the harm was done, and so calmly settled down for the round journey to Gondokoro and back, without a tear. The people on board who discovered her mistake in the first place, feared to tell me of it, and hoped that the return journey should be made without the matter being called to my attention. I suppose they thought I might want to charge her people with her fare.

Both boys and girls are circumcised in the northern districts of the Sudan, and the operation is carried out with great ceremony, especially in the case of boys. Invitations are issued to all the neighbouring villages, and it is usual for each visitor to bring a present to the parents of the child who is to be operated upon. In many cases it is arranged that several children are to be circumcised together, in which event an enormous crowd turns up, and there is much excitement among the visitors, each person fighting to obtain the best view. The boy usually rides through the streets before the ceremony, and is attended by a following of his relatives. During the operation he waves a whip in his hand in order to prove his courage, and to show that pain has no effect upon him. The age at which the ceremony takes place is usually five or six years.

The same ceremony is performed upon girls of about a similar age, but it is not regarded as an event

of much importance, and is frequently performed with little or no ceremony. The practice in the cases of females is much to be discouraged.

Unfortunately, I was never present at a wedding ceremony in the Sudan ; it is one which is attended with much pomp, and in cases where the contracting parties are well provided with money, feasting is kept up for a full week. The wedding of my boy Mohammed was, from his own account, a very grand affair. He became engaged when he had been in my service for a little over a year, and the date of his wedding was fixed for the early period of my first subsequent leave. His work in my service had been so unfailingly good, that I gave him a five-pound note as a wedding present, and this, in addition to many little odds and ends of household use, was, of course, wealth to him. He had always been of a saving disposition, and had accumulated quite a large sum of money ; he was already the possessor of some land in his village, and also of some sheep and goats. Therefore, his wedding was that of a rich man, and great preparations were made for the event. Invitations were issued prior to my departure for England, and on my return he described the affair to me. It was, as nearly as I can remember it, as follows.

On the day of his arrival at his village from Omdurman, he did not see his intended wife at all. The day was spent in receiving visits from his male friends, and in inspecting the new residence which was to be his after the marriage ceremony. On the



following morning he mounted a horse at sunrise, and attended by as many of his male friends as he could muster, he headed a procession to the river where the customary ablutions of the Moslem creed having been performed by all, he bathed alone. During the afternoon he visited his future bride, but only saw her in the presence of an aged female relative. The river ceremony was repeated each morning up to and on the day of the marriage. The moment that the marriage had taken place feasting commenced, and was carried on till a late hour at night, when the newly united pair were escorted to their new home. An *hakima*, or woman doctor, attended them, and was the only other person to enter the house ; she would then prepare things for the night, and would either remain in the bridal chamber until dawn, or leave when her services were at an end, according to the desire of the husband—in most cases this point is settled in accordance with the custom of the village where the ceremony has taken place.

For the first three days of married life the wife is not supposed to address her husband in conversation unless she is first spoken to by him. The morning after the marriage the husband leaves the house to visit his male friends, the bride meanwhile holds a reception of maidens. No married women visit her on this occasion. The husband returns at about noon, and from that hour until four o'clock the house is sacred—no one, even the most intimate friends of either party, would think of paying a visit between



Photo by G. B. Middleton

FAMILY AND THEIR RESIDENCE



these hours. Dancing and feasting follows in the evening, and on subsequent nights until the good things provided are exhausted, when life settles down into the routine which will be followed in the future. The refreshments at these feasts consist of sweetmeats of all descriptions, meat and rice cooked in a liquid butter known as *semn*, and which is very rich, fowls and pigeon, with the flat, unleavened bread which is the common form of nutriment in the country. The women seldom drink anything stronger than milk; for the men, milk, coffee, and a native-brewed beer *marissa* is provided. It is made of fermented durra, and is very thick. I tasted it once, and thought that it was most unpleasant, but the natives are very fond of it.

Fatalism is, of course, a very marked feature of the Sudanese character. "What will be will be; it is the will of Allah." I remember a curious incident in connection with this fatalism of the people; one which made me doubt very strongly at the time as to whether the professed beliefs of the people were as real as they pretended. I was coming down from Fashoda on one of the smaller gunboats, with a gyassa containing stores and a number of heavily shackled Dinka prisoners in tow alongside. Towards sunset a breeze rose, and later in the evening it developed into a steady gale. We had been late in leaving Fashoda, and I was therefore anxious to make as much headway as we could; I consequently decided to go on as long as possible in spite of the weather. But at about ten o'clock the wind suddenly



increased in volume, and the gyassa, rising and falling with the swell on the waters, became a real danger to the safety of the steamer. I gave orders to clear it, with the intention of cutting her adrift should we fail to find a safe stopping-place to put in at. In a few minutes the men came to say that all was ready, and as there was no place suitable for anchorage in sight, I descended from the bridge, and was about to order the men to cut the ropes when I suddenly noticed something moving in the gyassa.

I asked if everything had been removed.

“ Everything.”

“ Where have you put the prisoners ? ”

They had not been moved ; all the stores were safe on the steamer, but neither my sailors or the guard in charge of the wretched Dinkas had thought it necessary to move them. I got them on board with the greatest difficulty, cut the boat adrift, and then proceeded to let my crew know what I thought of them. They were greatly surprised.

“ The men were only Dinkas—slaves—besides, if Allah willed that they should be drowned, it would happen. What would you ? ”

I felt very much inclined to try an experiment as to how far this fatalism would carry one of my own men if I cast him into the river, but as I could not do that, I cut their pay and let the incident slide.

On another occasion, as I was going home on leave, a barge attached to the steamer on the Halfa-Assouan reach of the river suddenly broke adrift in heavy weather. She was carrying a full complement of

troops who were proceeding to Egypt off service in the Sudan. Not a man raised his hand to try and save the barge ; without exception they dropped on their knees, and started praying in audible and tearful tones. These men were Egyptians ; their faith was good to see, but they might have blended it with a little practical common sense with great advantage to themselves and everyone else concerned.

It is a common belief among the Sudanese that no good will come of a present if it is used on the day that it is given to one. I remember being sent a ring from England while I was in the Sudan. My boy was greatly taken with it when he saw me open the parcel, but he was horrified when I put it on my finger and left it there. He told me that it should be put away in the paper in which it had come until the following morning, otherwise it could never bring me luck. When I persisted in wearing it he shrugged his shoulders, but said no more. However, when next I had a present sent to me, he calmly took it away after I had opened it, and denied all knowledge of its whereabouts until the following morning, when he handed it back with the remark that if I would not look after myself, he must !

The " howling Dervishes," who were at one time one of the chief sights of Cairo, were to be heard nightly in their native element in Omdurman when I arrived there. Their cry is the weirdest sound imaginable, and they have the appearance of restless spirits as they stand in lines, and sway backwards and forwards with the name of Allah on their lips.

They hate doing this as a performance, and the really religious Sudanese will not consent to it ; they are entirely eaten up with religious fervour while they are at it, and they resent the presence of a Christian very strongly.

In my opinion the Moslem religion is one which has a great many good points, if, of course, it is lived up to thoroughly. I have come into contact with many men in the Sudan than whom it would be impossible to find better. These are not the class who will flop down at one's feet to pray the moment that work is about ; it is the people who deny themselves everything in order to live up to the Mohammedan teaching which exhorts its faithful to support their wives, and the families of their wives, in addition to their own family in cases of necessity. I can recall one man particularly. He was second *reis* on one of my steamers, and a better man I never knew. He was middle-aged, and was the only son of his mother, who was a widow. So he supported her. He had two wives, and of course he had to support them. His three sisters were either unmarried or divorced, so he kept them. His salary was not a large one, but notwithstanding the numerous calls upon his pay he was always in spotless clothes, and during the fast of Ramadan he was the only man of my crew who held steadfastly to the prescribed fast, while doing his full round of labour at the same time. At last his strength failed him, and I had to speak to him about it, though I never cared to interfere in their religious beliefs if it was in any way possible to avoid doing so.

I pointed out that his health would not stand the strain, and begged him to eat. He would not. "Then," I said, "you must take a day's rest, and we will do as best we can without you ; you shall not work and fast together any longer." That conquered him ; he said that he knew he could not be spared from his work, and that therefore, if I insisted, he would cease fasting for the rest of the prescribed term, and would make it up later when the work was not so heavy.

It always seemed to me that the Sudanese brought Allah into far more intimate relationship with themselves than do the majority of Christians in our own country. One constantly hears men talking together of what Allah would think if such and such a thing were done, or left undone ; they have a child-like faith which is very attractive. In questions of morality it must be borne in mind that the teaching of their religion is very different to ours, and it would be as well if our moralists, as well as our reformers, would remember, that in the words of Kipling—

" . . . the world is wondrous large,—seven seas from  
marge to marge,  
And it holds a vast of various kinds of man ;  
And the wildest dreams of Kew are facts of Khat-  
mandhu,  
And the crimes of Clapham chaste in Martaban."

I do not for an instant pretend that the Moham-  
medan religion stands, in its teaching, upon the same  
plane of nobleness or purity as the Christian, but I



do say that we should be tolerant of a belief which, though it may be erroneous, tends to bind its devotees in an unswerving bond of brotherhood.

I recollect hearing one Sudanese servant explaining to another the reason why the land is cursed with mosquitoes and flies.

“ In the beginning,” he said, “ the people of the northern Sudan were as those of the south, they knew nothing, and they would not work or learn. They slept all night, and then they slept nearly all day as well. To punish them Allah sent the mosquito, which troubled their rest at nights. This made them restless, but instead of making them work they would sleep *all* day to make up for the night. Then Allah became angry. ‘ What a people ! ’ he said, and he sent the seroot fly to sting them in the daytime as well. That kept them moving, and at length they began to work.”

“ But why did he not take the scourge away when we became *such* a people ? ” asked the other.

The first speaker thought for a moment, then—“ Fool,” he said, “ would you question the ways of Allah ? ”

I have mentioned the tom-toms with which the Sudanese beguile the early hours of darkness. They are made of skins bound over a hollow body, and are used as drums ; some of the tunes played are charming, and have far more rhythm in them than those of the Egyptian chants. The Sudanese are also very fond of singing, and will get through work very much faster if they have a man to lead them with his voice,

than they do if they are without music of any description. Some of these men are exceedingly clever, and make up verses of the song as they go, after the manner of the penillion singers of Wales. The following is a crude translation of a verse sung one night when I was in my bath ; the men were loading wood at one of the stations of the south, it may give some idea of the song. All the men joined in the singing of " Yalla ya Said," which followed each line. Unfortunately, however, this translation can carry with it no idea of its haunting strangeness and beauty in the original.

" The gentleman goes to his bath,  
     Yalla ya Said.  
 The bath is filled with water cold,  
     Yalla ya Said.  
 The gentleman's skin is very white,  
     Yalla ya Said.  
 Because of the cold in his own country,  
     Yalla ya Said.  
 He loves the splash of the white river,  
     Yalla ya Said."

The Sudanese are a naturally emotional people, and love display, whether it be of joy or of sorrow. I shall never forget the scene which followed the drowning of a man under the floating dock at Omdurman, when it was still under construction. The unfortunate man was at work on a scaffolding when he fell, and in floundering about in the water he got right under the dock and, I suppose, lost his head, for

though he was a good swimmer he did not reappear. The news spread like wildfire, and in a few moments the beach was crowded with natives. The men were silent in comparison to the women, who behaved like raving lunatics. For the first few moments their protestations of grief struck me as being false, but I am convinced that there was much genuine feeling—induced, no doubt, by their former acting—in the fever to which they ultimately worked themselves. I remember one woman particularly; she almost killed herself in the abandonment of her emotions. Time and again she flung herself prostrate on the ground, her forehead coming with a terrific impact against the soil. Then, not content, as were the majority of the others, with the mere throwing of dust on their heads, she worked her face deeply into the sand, until her countenance was scarred and bleeding. Her bloodstained and grimy face haunted me for days after the occurrence. She was not a professional mourner; but she had certainly missed her vocation.

The cries of the people, when at last the body of the dead man was discovered by divers and brought ashore, were heartrending, but again the actions of some of the mourners were so extravagant that it was with difficulty that one could realise that the scene was one in real life. The actors, strained and unconvincing in the first place, had worked themselves into their parts after a few moments; now they overplayed them.

I went to sleep that night to the accompaniment

of the mournful singing of those who had assembled at the dead man's residence to give him the final honour of a wake. In the early hours of the morning I waked to hear the same sound beating the still air with doleful and monotonous persistence. The sound was much more impressive now than it had been while still the ordinary sounds of life mingled with it; one felt that the people had at last struck the chord for which they had been striving, and that their protestations of grief were not for the ear of man, but were uttered in a direct appeal to an all-comprehending Deity.

The next day the man was laid to rest in the cemetery, where rested the bones of many hundreds of his compatriots; and after carefully placing a *goolah* of water and some grain at the head of the grave, that the dead man might know neither hunger or thirst should his spirit rise in the night, the mourners trudged back to the city, with their minds already filled with other thoughts. The will of Allah must be obeyed, and human life is cheaper in the Sudan than it is in Europe; there is the first acute and almost overpowering sense of loss, a night of mourning, an anguished five minutes at the grave of the departed—then a sun-purged mind and forgetfulness.

In the southern Sudan it may be that the constant fact of losing their friends and relatives through the raids of slave traders has something to do with the fact that separation is not felt so acutely as in other countries, or at least that the sense of loss does not survive many days. In all Eastern countries, of



course, human life is not held as sacred as it is in the West, but the people of this country do not appear to look upon death with the disregard of the Oriental proper; it is simply that their minds appear to be unable to retain the memory which they have cherished, for many days after that face is out of sight. There is undoubtedly very real affection between mother and child, brother and sister, or husband and wife at times, but I think that were one of the most loved sons in the Sudan to be killed, his mother would forget him, or at least she would not regret him with any great depth of feeling, after the first month of his absence.

This is a consideration which should not be overlooked by those who condemn the Government for the fact that there still remain slaves in the Sudan, slaves who are the property of masters who are law-abiding citizens, and staunch supporters of the Government.

The entire elimination of the slave trade in its every form is, of course, one of the chief desires of the Government, and the slaves who are now in the Sudan are those who were in the country in that capacity at the time when the English and Egyptian Governments appeared on the scene and routed the forces of Mahdism. The prohibition of slave traffic was one of the most unwelcome acts perpetrated by the Government; the strong had been accustomed to prey upon the weak for centuries, and this abrupt stoppage of one of the principal sources of income did not suit the traders at all. The Government

decided that it would be absurd to liberate all the slaves of the Sudan at one fell swoop, and creditable masters were therefore allowed to hold such slaves as they had in their possession. The slaves, however, were given the right to complain to the Government in case of cruel treatment, or any other cause of distress ; indeed, it was almost enough for a slave to wish for, and apply for his liberation, and it would be accorded him at once. Comparatively few applied for their manumission papers, and out of those who did, a large number have been absolute failures in after life.

A number of women obtained their freedom at demand in the Blue Nile province. Before a month had elapsed they had one and all adopted lives of open shame, and even when opportunities for marriage presented themselves they refused them.

I am convinced that many of the Egyptian officers, non-commissioned officers, and men who were serving with the Army in the Sudan, played important parts in the slave trade while I was in the country.

The Egyptian resented the quashing of this traffic to a greater extent than did the Sudanese, and he is never averse to assisting in a deal at the present moment, should an opportunity occur. I came across one instance where an Egyptian officer was dealing in human goods, and there are undoubtedly numerous others which we never hear about. In one way it is hard to blame them. The custom is one which has received the recognition of generation after generation of Egyptians, and it is very hard to uproot in a day

a custom which is so firmly implanted as this. A small Egyptian servant, who was with me in later days, told me that the *one* mistake of the English in Egypt was that they had put a stop to the slave traffic. His father had apparently been a big owner in the old days, and he keenly resented the change, whereby he was forced to pay for what labour he employed.

"Before the English came," said this boy, "we were rich and happy, for we had slaves to do all the work of the farm and of the house. If they did not work well, we would give them the *courbash*; now that is all over, and we have to work ourselves."

I asked him by what right his father had bought the men in the first place, as they had been free as himself at one time.

"He was the strongest man," the boy replied.

I pointed out that the English were considerably stronger than the Egyptians, what, therefore, was there to prevent them making slaves of his race? He saw the point, and admitted that there was something in the argument, but he got his shot in with the remark, "Yes, in the old days, if an Egyptian servant offended his master he would be thrashed; now, if my master were to thrash me I should take him to the Courts, and he would be punished."

Which, by the way, is perfectly true.

As I have already said, the Slave Repression Department has done some excellent work in the Sudan, and each year lessens the number of slaves who are sent over the borders of the country to serve in other

lands. And, naturally, each year also shows a steady decrease in the number of slaves actually living in the Sudan. In time, the whole system of slavery will have fallen into disuse, and each child born in the Sudan will be as free a subject as a Pasha. The people of the south are beginning to realise this, and they show a marked appreciation of the fact, since it was from their ranks that the majority of slaves were drawn in the old days. But it would have been manifestly unfair to deprive the slave-owners of the Sudan of their property at one swoop ; had this course been adopted it would have caused an enormous amount of dissatisfaction among the people ; even, in some cases, among the liberated slaves themselves, for they would have had nothing to do, no means of obtaining a livelihood, and they would have felt it keenly. As a general rule they were treated with kindness and consideration by their employers, and there were, apparently, very few cases of actual cruelty, though the sale of children, at an age when they were just becoming of real assistance to their parents, could never be anything else than cruel.

Occasionally, even in the time that I was in the Sudan, one would get a veiled offer of a slave, usually of the female sex. I think that, despite the efforts of the Government to put down the trade, it would have been quite possible, up to and probably beyond the time of my departure from the country, to purchase a slave of either sex in the markets of Omdurman.

As it was, the girls—they were often mere children



—who were brought into the houses of ill-fame in that town were really slaves to the woman or the man who ran the house. At a later date they would be permitted to marry, if they could find a husband; but I fancy that great difficulties would have been put in their way had they attempted to do this, or to leave the house on any other pretext, while they were still in the first bloom of their youth. The possession of a really attractive maiden might mean a fortune to the person to whom she belonged, and the Sudanese, like other races, were not slow to realise this.

The collection of money for the building of the famous Gordon College was the crowning act which makes the name of Lord Kitchener revered in the Sudan. To this college, and the excellence of its training, we, in common with the Sudanese, already owe much. The Director of Education, Mr. James Currie, was a man eminently fitted for the difficult task placed in his hands at the time when the Sudanese took their first draught of learning, and he has acquitted himself admirably in all respects. It is an extraordinary fact that though the Egyptian has been in close touch with civilisation for centuries, the average Egyptian of to-day cannot compare with the dark-skinned Sudanese in any one way where intellect is concerned. It is true that the educational movement has only of recent years reached anything like a standard of comprehensive usefulness; but now that it has come, the innate and ludicrous conceit of the Egyptian effendi leads him to imagine that the

Photo by G. B. Middleton

SUDANESE SCHOOL BOYS





mere act of attending college at all, renders him equal, if it does not render him superior, to the other people of the world. Of course, the state of affairs in Egypt at the present day is exceptionally bad by reason of the weakness of the British Government, which has pandered to the wishes of irresponsible and frequently half-educated Nationalists ; but that, after all, is not wholly responsible for the pig-headedness of the average student.

When the Gordon College was opened, and the Sudanese students began to feel the sense of superiority which is inseparable from the first stage of learning, it looked for a short time as though they, too, were going to overstep the mark. Youths crossing from Khartoum to Khartoum North by the ferry forgot their manners occasionally, and jostled Englishmen and women in their attempt to be first on board. Little acts such as this were common for a time ; but for a very short time only. The first stage past, the lads behaved themselves with dignity, and with them, learning developed the better side of their character, and has not drawn out evidences of an inflated and empty-headed conceit.

Boys are trained at the Gordon College to trades, and to various branches of learning which will prove of inestimable value to them in the future. Young men, on completion of a certain period in the college itself, are drafted into the workshops of the Steamers and Boats Department at Khartoum North, where they receive practical training as mechanics and engineers, and this is a trade which they are eminently



suitied for. They love machinery and all that pertains to it. A special providence must have overlooked the working of the steamers in the time of the Khalifa, for there appears to have been no one who thoroughly understood the machinery, and they are, even yet, rather casual in the treatment of their boilers ; if there is plenty of water in them, well and good, if not, *ma'leesh*, they probably will not burst ! I remember once finding a boiler emptied in readiness for cleaning the following morning. There was no one near, the native engineer had opened the cocks to blow down, and departed thankfully ; everything was in order to his mind. The only thing he had forgotten to do was to rake out the fire !

I told the engineer in charge of the workshops of the occurrence. He took it very philosophically. " Oh, well, it is the Sudan," he said ; " if it had been done at home, the crown of the boiler would have come in ; here, nothing will happen."

It is extraordinary, but nothing ever does happen disastrously, or, if it does, no one suffers.

The floating dock, to which I have alluded more than once, was sunk on her first trial. The pumps were started to sink it sufficiently to take a steamer, when it suddenly heaved forward, and in a moment it had disappeared beneath the waters of the White Nile opposite Omdurman. The event caused a great sensation among the natives ; it was a bad failure. However, thanks to the untiring efforts of the Engineers stationed in Omdurman at the time, it was raised again in a few days, and was in full working

order to be shown to Lord Kitchener, who had ordered its construction in the first place, when he arrived on a visit to the Sudan some time afterwards.

In writing of the visit of Lord Kitchener I am reminded of an incident which occurred the day before he arrived in Khartoum. There had been several thefts from the steamers in the dockyard, and I remember going the round of the boat on which I was sleeping before turning in, to see that a watchman was awake, as we happened to have a lot of valuable stores on board. Everything was in order, so I went to bed. The next morning my boy informed me that he had caught the thief in the night, but had let him go as he was a poor man, and the fright which he had received would be sufficient to prevent his making any further attempts to rob the steamers. It appeared that in the early hours of the morning my boy was lying half awake, when he saw a man stealing quietly down the bank opposite the ship, and come on board. He was stark naked, but he carried the small knife which the Sudanese use, in its sheath on his left arm. Mohammed, feigning sleep, watched him quietly. He came right to where the boy lay, and searched about. His body was heavily greased; thus, had anyone attempted to capture him, he would have literally slipped through their fingers. My boy was too wise to attempt to do this; he waited calmly until the man, finding nothing of sufficient value on deck to steal, descended into one of the holds. Then he rose calmly, closed the hold, and sat on the cover and called for help.

This statement was confirmed by other members of the crew. I was naturally furious that the thief should have been allowed to escape, but it was certainly true that there were no more attempts to steal from the ships for a long time after the incident.

Taking the country all through there are very few cases of actual burglary, though almost every Sudanie will steal in small quantities when opportunity offers, but only, it must be said in their defence, if they think that the man they rob is able to afford the loss. They seldom steal from each other, but rob the richer classes with the greatest nonchalance. They seem to think that if they are able to do this it is no more than their due, and that they are harming nobody.

Their standard of morality in this respect is distinctly higher than the Egyptians', who would rob their grandmothers if they got the chance.

## CHAPTER XIV

### YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY

IN the Government Report on the Egyptian Provinces of the Sudan for the year 1884, the following description of Khartoum appears:—

“ . . . The town, as approached from the white river, presents a mass of dirty-grey houses, overtopped by a single minaret, and in front lies a sterile sandy plain, without trees or bushes. It is entered by a long, narrow street, stretching from west to east, and terminating in the market. This street is dirty in the extreme, and bordered by mud houses, whose doors are their only openings to the street. In other parts of the town there is no semblance of regularity ; the houses are of all sizes and shapes, and the streets are labyrinths. Here and there are open spaces large enough for gardens, and even for cornfields.

“ There are numerous hollow flats, in which, during the rainy season, water collects and stagnates, rendering the place very unhealthy. The street above-mentioned is the best in Khartoum ; it contains the Governor’s residence and offices, and many spacious mansions belonging to Turks, Copts, and Arabs. All the other houses are of a miserable description, consisting of sun-dried clay, cemented with cow-dung



and slime. In the market-place is the mosque, built of brick, and here also are the bazaars, coffee-houses, brandy-shops, etc. In addition to the buildings already mentioned, there is a Coptic and a Roman Catholic Chapel, a Roman Catholic school, an infirmary, a gaol, and barracks.

“The gardens along the Blue Nile produce vegetables and fruits in great variety. The date-palm here reaches its most southern limit, and ceases to fully ripen its fruit, though as a tree it still grows vigorously.

“There is much land for cultivation along the borders of the Blue Nile, but the tax on the water-wheels, and the contribution levied on the produce, cause the Arabs to limit their agriculture to their bare necessities.

“The population is of a very mixed character.”

That report was written in the yesterday of the Sudan, the dark yesterday, when the country appeared to be without hope or value. The following quotation is from an interesting article by Mr. John Prioleau, late editor of the “Egyptian Morning News,” and a well-known authority upon Egyptian questions, which appeared in the “Outlook” in July, 1909, over the initials “J. P.” and under the title of:—

#### “THE NEW SUDAN AND ITS CAPITAL.

“For the traveller, weary of the round of old-world countries and their capitals, there can scarcely be found a spot more interesting for a short visit than the capital of the rescued Sudan. It is here that you

will find that irresistible instinct of colonisation, inbred in every Englishman, given full rein and developing the vast resources of the country as surely and successfully as it has done elsewhere in Greater Britain. And for an outward sign of this you will see, as the result of ten years' unremitting toil, an administration which, for efficiency, clear-sightedness, and broad-minded principles, will be long remembered. But it would be impossible in a brief survey to describe in detail the work accomplished by Sir Reginald Wingate and his Government. Nor, indeed, would such an attempt escape the charge of presumption, seeing that it is but a year since Lord Cromer published his book, in which every particular is set down with minute accuracy. One or two fresh features, however, have appeared since 'Modern Egypt' was printed, and it is of these, and the wonderful impression made on the new-comer to Khartoum, that I now propose to treat.

"First in importance comes Port Sudan, the newly created harbour on the Red Sea, which was opened in state by the Khedive on April 1. This is a large natural harbour, the arm of water which runs inland in a north-westerly direction providing, at a low computation, six miles of deep-water docks. The tides are so slight that they do not exceed a rise and fall of twelve inches at any time of the year; there is no current, and vessels can steam in and out at comparatively high speeds without risk. The depth, in some places as much as fifty fathoms, enables the largest steamers to proceed, without the

assistance of tugs, right up to the limits of the estuary to the great dockyards, where every facility for the most extensive repairs is found. These great natural advantages, together with the new plant of machinery of the latest pattern, in the shape of cranes, hoists, and derricks, all worked by and controlled from a central electric-power station, capable of handling in the most rapid and economical manner the largest quantity of goods, at once place Port Sudan at the head of the Red Sea ports, and ensure for it as much trade as its, at present, necessarily limited staff can undertake. Although it has only just been officially declared open for traffic, a considerable amount of business has been done during the past year. Cotton and cereals, including dhurra, the staple food of Egypt, have been sent out steadily, and since the first shipment was made the trade has doubled. And in this connection it may be mentioned that in the Sudan dhurra is sown and reaped in sixty days, giving generally three crops, and when water is available, five. It will, therefore, be seen how excellent are the prospects of the new town.

“A certain amount of cheap criticism has been levelled at this undertaking, chiefly by disappointed speculators and by persons who have an imperfect knowledge of their subject. A small section of the former have apparently a grudge against the Sudan, probably because the Government are doing all in their power to prevent a boom like that which threw Egypt into hopeless financial confusion two years ago, and they have not hesitated to seek the publicity of

the Press for their opinions. These latter, however, may be disregarded. But it has been urged by less prejudiced persons that the £914,000 odd spent by the Egyptian Government in developing this place have been thrown away. Wharves and docks have been constructed, and expensive machinery has been set up to accommodate a rush of traffic which, it is contended, will never come into being. A moment's consideration of the facts will be sufficient to dispel such an illusion from the mind of anyone acquainted with the first principles of developing a new country's resources. The Sudan is a country three-quarters the size of India, whose export trade, especially that of the rich lands in the south and south-west, although still in its infancy, has, in a few years, attained proportions greatly in excess of the most sanguine expectations. The only ports through which this ever-increasing stream of trade could be brought to market were those of Egypt: Alexandria, already overcrowded; Suez, a place affording few facilities; and Port Said. Each of these is at an immense distance from the place of production, the vast province of Kordofan, the source of the gum, which is one of the staple products of the Sudan, being over two thousand miles from the Mediterranean. Transport, by river-steamer and rail, is consequently very costly. In Port Sudan, which is a comparatively short distance from the capital, the country has a much-needed outlet for the huge exports to come, and an organisation fit to cope with the heaviest trade.



“Next in interest, if not actually next in importance, are the new Khartoum Waterworks. During the writer’s visit these were undergoing inspection by a leading military expert, and, in the course of conversation afterwards, he admitted that in all his varied experience of such works in China, India, and other parts of the Empire, he had never come across so perfect, simple, and reliable a method of supplying a large city with the purest water. The full results of the various tests made at the time are not yet available, but, judging from those obtained up to the time of writing, the Khartoum supply, at any rate as regards purity, will be found to be among the first in the world.

“These two are the chief innovations since Lord Cromer wrote ‘Modern Egypt.’ There are, besides, several smaller institutions which have done exceedingly well, and among these must be counted the tramway which connects the ferries between Khartoum, Omdurman, and Khartoum North. So successful is this that the profits, amounting sometimes to over five hundred pounds a month, cover about one-third of the municipal expenses. As regards the other public works in progress the most important is the extension of the railway from Khartoum North to Senaar, in the province lying between the Blue and White Niles, a hundred and fifty miles from Khartoum. The bridge to carry the line across the Blue Nile to Khartoum proper is already in an advanced stage of construction. From Senaar it is proposed to lead across the heart of Kordofan, by way of Gedid, a

further hundred miles. (It was at Gedid that the Sirdar finally caught the Khalifa and his Emirs.) When his scheme has been completed—and, at the rate at which work is usually done in the Sudan, this should not take long—the transport problem for the country south and south-west of the capital will be solved, and the Sudan will have the opportunity of giving substantial proof of its importance to the Empire as well as to Egypt.”

This was written only a little over a year ago, and yet it is already ancient history. For the work in the Sudan never stands still. The projected railway to Senaar, of which Mr. Prioleau speaks, is now some miles south of Wad Medani, and the line between Khartoum and the above town has been open to traffic since the 1st of January last!

The construction of this railway would, of course, never have been undertaken had it not been thought that it would pay in the end, but the most optimistic of its promoters could scarcely have anticipated such extraordinarily good results as have been actually achieved. The takings for the first month's workings realised £10,000, and the returns for the rest of the time have been equally good. It was estimated in the first place that two train-loads a week would be good, and sufficient to justify the construction of the line. As a matter of fact, a train a day has been necessary to carry all the goods, and that train was invariably heavily loaded. It must be remembered, too, that this railway serves a district of the country which is independent of artificial irrigation :

the produce carried has been raised by the natives themselves on land which does not rob Egypt of one drop of its coveted water.

The passenger traffic has also greatly exceeded expectations: the fourth-class native fares alone have produced funds almost sufficient to cover the whole working expenses of the section.

It is impossible to gauge the revenue which will accrue to the Government from this railway as soon as the further section is completed and it is open to traffic as far as Senaar. As I have pointed out in the chapter dealing with the Blue Nile, the river is only navigable as far as Wad Medani in times of low Nile, and much produce is floated down-stream on rafts, from the south to Khartoum. All this will be altered: the pleasant drifting days will be over from the hour that the first train leaves Senaar with produce to the north; Senaar will emerge from its present-day insignificance, and will take its place as one of the most important junctions in the Sudan.

And so the work of civilisation goes steadily on. An English official is murdered near Wad Medani, and the Sudan lies in danger of revolt. Then almost before grass has grown upon the graves which stand as witnesses to trouble, the pioneers of empire are at hand, and the shriek of a locomotive proclaims their victory.

Again, there is another change to record in the "To-day" of the Sudan, a change which has come since the first pages of this book were in type. The Belgian settlements of the "Lado enclave," of which

I have written, are subject to alien rule no longer : with the death of the King of the Belgians they have become provinces of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. Leased to King Leopold for his lifetime only, the whole territory bordering the Nile reverted to the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan upon his death, and, according to the agreement, six months after his demise, all the stations in this territory were formally handed over to the Sudan authorities.

Thus the whole valley of the Nile has become subject to the authority of England. The Uganda territories are ours alone, the Sudan is a joint protectorate of England and Egypt ; Egypt herself comes under the jurisdiction of the Government at Westminster. The presence of an alien force upon the western banks of the southern Nile was always to be regretted ; it formed an irritating, if not actually dangerous, obstruction to our complete control of the Nile.

And it cannot be said that the Congolese authorities in the Lado enclave showed any traits of character which makes their disappearance a thing to be regretted. It has been shown that they were not always very politic in their dealings with their neighbours, and apart from this, their continued tenure would have completely devastated a valuable shooting field of the world. I have spoken of the lack of sporting instincts which they displayed with the rifle, but it was not only in this particular branch of sport that their instincts of indiscriminate slaughter asserted itself. The inhabitants of the river suffered



to quite as great an extent as did the inhabitants of the plains and forests of the district. When the officials of the Congo stations desired fish, they resorted to an abominable, if simple, method of obtaining it. They discharged gun-cotton in the water, and as the dead fish rose to the surface they raked in what was necessary to their needs, and left the remainder to float down the river to rot on its surface, or to afford an easy meal for crocodiles.

In writing of fish I am reminded of a strange thing which occurred near Lake No at the entrance to the sudd. I was proceeding south with a number of officers, including a Captain Hawker, on board. This latter officer had a small felucca, or rowing-boat, which on this occasion was in tow alongside the steamer. Night had just fallen when suddenly there was a heavy crash in the boat, and on going to investigate I found that a big fish had either jumped into the boat or had been thrown up by the wheel of the steamer.

It proved to be the largest fish that I or anyone else on board had ever seen; I believe it constituted a record. When we attempted to haul him out at first he broke a seat in the boat with one slash of his tail, but we eventually got him on board to be weighed and measured.

I took down the result in my diary at the time, and though I have an uneasy feeling that no one will believe me, I can only refer doubters to Captain Hawker and record the weight and measurements as they were taken before every Englishman on

Photo by G. B. Middleton

A NILE FISH

p. 300





board. Weight, 250 lbs.; length, 6 feet 1 inch; girth, 4 feet 7 inches.

Captain Hawker preserved the skeleton, but I do not know how he has disposed of it. Contrary to what might have been expected, the fish proved to be excellent eating, and its advent caused great rejoicings among my crew.

But I must return to the two reports on the Sudan with which I started this chapter. This digression was not premeditated, but it is not often that anyone has the opportunity of telling such a Great Fish Story as this one, one which has an additional merit in happening to be true.

I have not previously spoken of the great work which has been accomplished at Port Sudan, and to which Mr. Prioleau refers, because it came beyond my limit of personal knowledge, and the opening of the port occurred long after I had left the country. But, that among all the works which have been accomplished in the Sudan, this comes as first in importance is obvious to anyone with the most elementary knowledge of the country. With the construction of the Port Sudan railway an uninterrupted, and short railway journey from the capital of the Sudan to the sea was secured; with the opening of the port itself, the country has been given the shipping centre which was one of its chief requirements, and which will be of inestimable value to the Sudan. The construction of a railway to connect Assouan with Halfa would entail enormous expense, and it is not likely that this work will now be undertaken, for



the other route has rendered it more or less unnecessary. And, apart from the advantages of a quick transport route for merchandise which is now assured to the country, there is another and almost equally great advantage in the fact that troops can now be drafted into the Sudan without having to pass through Egypt, or could likewise be brought to bear upon Egypt from the south, as well as the north, in the event of a big rising. It gives us a command over the Sudan such as never could have been ours had we been dependent upon Egypt for the transport of troops ; events move quickly in the Sudan, and it is of paramount importance that we should be enabled to display our force with the least possible delay should occasion arise.

There has been a lot of nonsense talked by members of the Legislative Council of Egypt regarding the loans which the Egyptian Government have made to the Sudan ; there has been a lot of nonsense written about the same subject in some of the cosmopolitan Press of Egypt. It has been said that Egypt is too poor to afford this drain on her finances, and that the money so granted is wasted, or that at all events it might be used to better advantage in Egypt. Recommendations have been made that there should be no further grants loaned to the Sudan at all, and that it should be forced to rely entirely upon its own resources ; that any further improvements which the Sudan officials may deem necessary for the country, and which they cannot afford without assistance from Egypt, should be left until such time

as sufficient revenue should be forthcoming out of the coffers of the Sudan Government. These suggestions have not, happily, been taken seriously; their absurdity must have been apparent to every thinking man in either Egypt or the Sudan. As a matter of fact, these monies which are granted to the Sudan are excellent investments to Egypt, even were not the former country subject to the joint protectorate of the latter. The Sudan can never be self-supporting unless it is accorded the fullest and most commodious means of transport, and in order to obtain this it was unavoidable that a certain amount of money should be borrowed in the first place. The annual sum granted by Egypt to the Sudan has been considerably decreased during recent years, and not only is this the case, the country is paying interest at the rate of three per cent on every penny it draws, or has drawn, from Egypt. Under a less capable administration there might have been some grounds for complaint, but as I have previously remarked, the Sudan has been fortunate in its choice of officials, and never more so than in the appointment of Colonel Bernard to the post of Financial Secretary. For the many years which he has held this post there has never been a false move made, there has never been a penny allotted to any work which might have been placed to any other with better advantage. He is one of the hardest-working officials of the Sudan; he is also one of the most able.

I have spoken of the necessity for blasting and other operations at certain portions of the river as

being of the most pressing description, and have said that I consider it a mistake on the part of the Government that money should not be allotted for this purpose, but these questions only affect Colonel Bernard in a secondary degree, since he is, of course, obliged to follow the path laid down for him, and if such works as I have spoken of are not urged, they are naturally placed low on his list, and are overlooked entirely. The work of the Financial Secretary is one of the most arduous, and at the same time one of the most thankless, in the Sudan. It is seldom that the full credit demanded by any one department can be met, and there is, consequently, always a display of real or assumed dissatisfaction when the actual figures of the Budget are made known.

To stop the financial assistance which has hitherto been given to the Sudan by Egypt at the present moment, would be to undo at one stroke, much of the good which has been accomplished in the astonishingly short space of time which has elapsed since the fall of Omdurman. As matters stand the Sudan is in no active need of money other than that which she is already allowed; in addition to that which accrues from her own revenue. The greatest disadvantage under which the country labours is that of underpopulation. This is a very real trouble, and one which will have to be overcome in some manner before the country can reach a standard of prosperity such as it is naturally capable of attaining. It was at one time suggested to import American negroes as labourers, but, fortunately, the scheme was never



attempted. In the event of its happening, I cannot but believe that any advantages which might follow, would be nullified by the harm which the contact with American negroes would work on the Sudanese. Brought suddenly into contact with such men as American negroes, men of the same colour, but infinitely further advanced in civilisation than the Sudanese themselves, they would be prone to assimilate the worst traits of the race, and to absorb ideas of their own importance which would be very far removed from the proper level on which they should stand. Again, there would be insurmountable differences of creed to be considered, and there is nothing which the Sudanese would be quicker to resent than the arrival of a more civilised body of men—to all appearances of the same standing as themselves—who would not only differ from them in the matter of religion, but who might very possibly ridicule its forms and ceremonies.

Another suggestion which is infinitely more likely to succeed if acted upon, is that of Sir Walter Merivale, who advocates the introduction of Indian labour to the Sudan; the men to be drawn entirely from Mohammedan tribes. But even in this case I consider that it would not be well to mix the two races, at least at first; the aliens could be given districts to work, and subjected, of course, to the same jurisdiction as the native-born. The decimation of the population which followed the disastrous and murderous rule of the Mahdi and his successor in the country will take years to overcome in the natural course of events, and



in the meanwhile the country is treated under circumstances which cannot be otherwise than unfavourable, since there are not nearly enough hands to work all the cultivatable land.

Every year which the English spend in the country tends to reduce the recurrence of some of the devastating epidemics which used formerly to run through the length and breadth of the land, and thus the normal birth-rate will have some opportunity of asserting itself. But, even so, it will be many years before there can be a sufficient increase of population to put the country right again. And also against the rise in the population, it must be remembered that a large proportion of the people will not, in the future, devote themselves to agricultural pursuits entirely as in the old days ; they are being taught new trades, new enterprises are springing up in the country, and a certain number of men will be required year by year to keep these going properly. Then when the demands of the Army are taken into consideration, it will be found that there is in reality but a very small proportion of the able-bodied men of the Sudan who will be available for agriculture, and there seems no way out of the difficulty other than by introducing alien labour into the country. As, of course, the greater the produce of the country, the greater its wealth, it is to be hoped that something may be done in the direction of filling up the gaps in the population at as early a date as possible.

Egyptians are useless for the purposes of colonisation in the Sudan, even if they could be spared from

their own country. They do not like the Sudan, and the climate does not suit them; there would also be an everyday possibility of disturbances, for the Egyptian looks down upon the Sudanie, and the Sudanie looks down upon the Egyptian. It is more than doubtful whether the ties of creed would be sufficient to ward off open conflicts.

But though this under-population is a very real obstacle in the way of the rapid expansion of the country, it has in no way affected the material work of civilisation which has been quietly undermining the strongholds of fanaticism and savagery during the past few years. The name of the Sudan, once synonymous with fever, rapine, and bloodshed, now carries with it the vision of a new and popular tourist resort, health-giving, and of exceeding interest. Hundreds of travellers, who a few years ago would have sooner dreamed of demanding a ticket to the North Pole than to Khartoum, now walk calmly into the offices of Messrs. Thomas Cook and Sons and take their circular tickets to Gondokoro, via Egypt and the Sudan. And they do this knowing that there is no discomfort in the journey; knowing that at every station they will meet with those smartly uniformed officials, without whom the whole world would be lost in these days of travel; knowing that language will present no difficulties for them, for Cook's guides are apparently gifted with an apostolic tongue which carries understanding even to the mind of a Dinka.

In Khartoum—where Gordon fell—they wander

now through ordered streets and gardens, for the metamorphosis of the country is complete, and, as a guarantee of future safety, "Over the sand and the palm trees," flies, side by side with the Star and Crescent of Egypt, the flag of our Sovereign Lord the King.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE MIRTH OF ALLAH

“When Allah made the Sudan he laughed.”

Native saying.

WHY ?

I have questioned all sorts and conditions of men of many races, and I have never been given the same answer. I questioned the boy—a Sudanie—from whose lips I first heard the quotation, and he said it was because it was Allah's best work ! I questioned an Egyptian officer who had just arrived in the country, and he replied that it was because Allah had succeeded in His wish to show what He *could* have done had He wished to create the whole world a Hades ! Englishmen are usually doubtful ; some say one thing, some another.

Personally, my opinion while in the Sudan differed according to time and season. Sometimes, when I have been vainly seeking a refuge from storm and mosquitoes, under a waterproof sheet, in a bath some three sizes too small for me, or when I have stood on the top deck of my steamer, and looked afar into the desolation of the sudd, I have fancied that I heard an echo of the ironical laughter of Allah as He looked upon this world, and, having made all things else



beautiful, thought, as we may think when we look upon some of our hurried efforts,—“I’ve done it this time.”

But, again, when the fascination of the tangled forests, or the sweeping, boundless plains, or even the sight of an elephant plunging through the sudd, have laid their hold upon my mind, I felt that I was wrong, and that the youthful Sudanie enthusiast who first spoke to me on the subject, was nearer the truth than I had been.

There are thousands of miles of land in the Egyptian Sudan which will, in the fullness of time, be converted into thriving agricultural country; there are thousands of miles which must lie unchanged through the centuries, the throne of desolation.

Now, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and ten, the Sudan is still in its earliest youth; for centuries it has lain neglected, far beyond the sweep of the scythe of civilisation; small bodies of men have crossed its borders, eager to import the benefits of knowledge upon a savage and primitive race. One by one they have sunk to their graves under the pressure of gnawing sickness, or at the hands of those incomprehending natives whom they had sought to serve. A few came straggling back, with the forlorn knowledge of complete failure to companion them.

It was the “end of cultivation.”

But the change has come at last. At the cost of thousands of lives it is true, the Sudan has been forced, willy nilly, into the acceptance of knowledge

and all that knowledge brings. Waking—like a child on the threshold of understanding—the country finds the fruit of the world's endeavour spread before it; all that science, commerce and art have to offer in their twentieth-century perfection is there for the asking, and after five years' residence in the Sudan it is my belief that the Sudanese will prove to be no tardy applicants. Unlike the Egyptians they have no great past to turn to; their accomplishment lies all in the future, and, already, with one great bound, they have leapt forward to grasp their opportunity.

And so, after all, the challenging assertion of the Sudanie boy regarding the mirth of Allah may well have truth upon its side. For it may be that Allah in surveying His work, was struck, as we of the Western world have been, with the possibilities of the Sudan and its inhabitants, and that, His eye roving over the plains and jungles of this, the spare room of the world, He looked far into the depths of an ordered future and laughed with the joy of a creator who knows that His work is good.



## APPENDICES

FOR the convenience of sportsmen visiting the Sudan I am appending two of the more important Proclamations of the Sudan Government. These orders are, of course, liable to alteration from time to time, but the order of the year is at all times rigidly enforced. The fullest information is always obtainable from the Sudan Agent at the War Office in Cairo, and a strict compliance with his injunctions is necessary to prevent delay and disappointment in the Sudan.

### APPENDIX A

#### DISTRICTS CLOSED TO TRAVELLERS

With reference to notice as to passports and reporting for Europeans and foreigners, published in the *Sudan Gazette* of the 1st August, 1903, No. 50, page 99, His Excellency the Governor-General has been pleased to order as follows :—

(1) Europeans and foreigners not being traders, travelling for the purpose of pleasure and sport south of Khartoum or in Kordofan, who have a subsisting game licence, need not obtain a pass from the Secretary-General unless they enter the districts mentioned below.

(2) No European or foreign traveller is, until further notice, permitted to enter the districts mentioned below, unless he obtains the Governor-General's special permission through the office of the Secretary-General, Khartoum, and any traveller who obtains such special permission must



regulate his movements in accordance with instructions, which will be given to him.

Owing to the local conditions of these districts, such special permission will be granted to persons travelling for pleasure or sport under exceptional circumstances only.

#### THE DISTRICTS ABOVE REFERRED TO

(a) The Kordofan Province south of a line connecting Sherkeila, Rahad, Abu Haraz, Abu Zabbat, Nahud, and El Eddeiya.

(b) The Bahr El Ghazal Province.

(c) The districts south and west of a line drawn from Nasser on the Sobat to Fading on the Khor Filus, thence to the mouth of the Zeraf river (which the steamers or boats of private parties may not enter), and thence to the western end of Lake No.

With the exception that parties using a steamer or boat on the river as a base, and not proceeding more than a day's march inland from it, may shoot on either bank of the Upper Nile north of Shambe, and south of Shambe on the east bank to the Uganda boundary.

### ORDER

#### THE PRESERVATION OF WILD ANIMALS ORDINANCE, 1908

In exercise of the powers conferred upon me by sections 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, and 13 of the above-mentioned Ordinance, and of every other power enabling me in this behalf, I, Major-General Sir Francis Reginald Wingate, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., D.S.O., Governor-General of the Sudan, do HEREBY ORDER and PRESCRIBE as follows:—

1. In this order the term “the Ordinance” means the Preservation of Wild Animals Ordinance, 1908.

2. (See Section 4 of the Ordinance.)

For the purpose of the Ordinance the Classes 1, 2, and 3,

mentioned in Section 4, shall include respectively the several species of animals and birds respectively mentioned in Parts i., ii., and iii. of the first schedule thereto, subject as to Class 1 to the provisions in favour of ostrich farming contained in Sections 4 and 9 of the Ordinance, and provided that Rhinoceros shall be included in Class 1 in the Provinces of Kassala and Sennar, and therefore may not be hunted, captured, or killed in these provinces, but shall be included in Class 2 in the rest of the Sudan, and therefore may be hunted or captured or killed to the extent specified in the next paragraph of this order, and in Part ii. of said first schedule.

3. (See Section 6 of the Ordinance.)

The number of animals or birds of any species included in Class 2 and 3 which a licence holder may capture or kill during the currency of one licence shall be those respectively mentioned with regard to each such species in Parts ii. and iii. of the first schedule hereto.

4. (See Section 6 of the Ordinance.)

The fees payable in respect of licences "A" and "B" issued under the above-mentioned Ordinance shall be:— For an "A" licence, £E50; for a "B" licence, £E5, except when issued to an officer or official of the Sudan Government or of the British or Egyptian Governments or Armies, provided such officer or official be serving in the Sudan or in Egypt, and subject to my approval in each case to a person ordinarily resident in the Sudan or intending to reside there, in which case the fees shall be:—

For licence A, £E6; for licence B, £E1; and except also that the licensing officer may at his discretion issue to any person a temporary licence B for one or more consecutive days, not exceeding four, at the rate of P.T.25 for each day. Provided always that every holder of a licence A issued at the £E6 shall pay to the Superintendent of Game Preservation Department an additional fee of £E10 for every elephant killed or captured by him under such licence.

Provided also that every holder of licence A issued at either rate shall pay to the licence officer an additional fee of £E20 for every giraffe killed or captured by him under such licence. Every holder of licence A shall report in writing to the Superintendent, Game Preservation Department, Khartoum, at the first opportunity, the killing or capture of any animal in respect of which he is hereby required to pay an additional fee as aforesaid, and shall either pay the amount of such fee into some Government chest to the credit of the Game Preservation Department, and inform the Superintendent, Game Preservation Department, of the number and date of the order by which he paid it in and the place where the payment was made, or transmit the amount of the fee to the Superintendent, Game Preservation Department, with the report.

5. (See Section 6 of the Ordinance.)

Every licence shall be valid for the period of one year from the date of issue thereof, except in the case of a temporary licence, which shall be valid for the particular days therein specified.

6. (See Section 10 of the Ordinance.)

The sale and purchase of the hides, horns, and flesh, or of any trophies of any animals and birds specified in the first part of the second schedule hereto, is absolutely prohibited throughout the Sudan.

The sale and purchase of the hides, horns, or flesh, or of any trophies of the animals specified in the second part of the second schedule hereto, is prohibited in those parts of the Sudan which are specified in the second part of the same schedule.

7. (See Section 11 of the Ordinance.)

Subject to the exemption contained in sub-section 5 of Section 11 of the Ordinance in favour of the holders of licences issued under the Ordinance and to the exceptions contained in sub-section 6 of the same section, *ad valorem* duty of 20 per cent shall be paid on elephant hides and

hippopotamus hides, and an *ad valorem* duty of 10 per cent shall be paid on all other hides, horns, flesh, or trophies of any animal or bird included in Classes 1, 2, and 3 which may lawfully be sold.

This duty shall be paid at the time and place provided by Section 11 of the Ordinance. This duty is in addition to any Customs duties which may at any time be payable on the export of any such things from the Sudan, and to any Royalties which may under any Ordinance for the time being be leviable on any such things.

8. (See Section 12 of the Ordinance.)

An export tax shall be levied upon each living specimen exported from the Sudan of each species of animal or bird mentioned in the third schedule hereto at the rate specified for each species in the same schedule.

9. (See Section 13 of the Ordinance.)

The districts hereinafter described are hereby constituted a sanctuary for game under the provisions of Section 13 of the Ordinance, namely:—The district bounded on the north by a line drawn from Kaka on the White Nile to Famaka on the Blue Nile, on the east by the Blue Nile from Famaka to the Abyssinian Frontier and then by the boundary with Abyssinia to the Baro river, on the south by the Baro river to its junction with the Sobat river and then by the Sobat river to its junction with the White Nile, and on the west by the main channel of the While Nile.

10. The district hereinafter described is hereby constituted a reserve for game under the provisions of Section 13 of the Ordinance, namely:—The district bounded on the north by a line drawn from Jebelein on the White Nile to Karkoj on the Blue Nile, on the east by the Blue Nile between Karkoj and Famika, on the south by a line drawn from Famika to Kaka, and on the west by the While Nile between Kaka and Jebelein.

11. (See Section 13 of the Ordinance.)

A special permit issued to any holder of a licence (A



or B) authorising him to hunt, capture, or kill wild animals or birds in the Reserve shall (except in the case of a person residing in the Reserve or of any officer or official stationed in the Reserve) be valid for a period not exceeding 30 days, to be specified in such permit.

A special permit authorising the holder to hunt, capture, or kill wild animals or birds, either in the Sanctuary or in the Reserve, shall not be issued to the holder of a temporary licence (B).

## THE FIRST SCHEDULE

### PART I

Class 1. Animals or birds which may not be hunted, captured, or killed:—

Wild Ass . . . . .	Shoe Bill ( <i>Balaeniceps</i> )
Zebra . . . . .	Ground Horn Bill ( <i>Bucorax</i> )
Ostrich . . . . .	Secretary Bird ( <i>Serpentarius</i> )

and (in Kassala and Sennar Provinces only) Rhinoceros.

Ostriches may be hunted and captured but not killed, for the purpose of ostrich farming, but not otherwise.

### PART II

Class 2. Animals and birds a limited number of which may be captured or killed by the holder of an "A" licence, and the number of each species which may be captured or killed:—

Giraffe (subject to the payment of an additional fee of ££20)	1	fee of ££10 for each Elephant)	2
Rhinoceros (except in Kassala and Sennar Provinces, in which Rhinoceros may not be killed or captured)	1	Buffalo . . . . .	3
Mrs. Gray's Water Buck ( <i>Cobus Maria</i> ) . . . . .	1	Water Buck ( <i>Cobus Defassa</i> ) . . . . .	4
Eland ( <i>Taurotragus</i> ) . . . . .	1	(But not more than 2 of these may be captured or killed in Kassala and Sennar Provinces and on the White Nile north of Kodok.)	
Kudu ( <i>Strepsiceros</i> ) . . . . .	1	Roan Antelope ( <i>Hippotragus</i> ) . . . . .	4
Oryx Beisa . . . . .	1	(But not more than 2 of these may be killed or captured in Kassala and Sennar Provinces and on the White Nile north of Kodok.)	
Elephant (subject as regards holders of licences "A" issued at the ££6 rate to the payment of an additional			

Bush Buck ( <i>Tragelaphus</i> ) . . . . .	4	Reed Buck ( <i>Cervicapra</i> ) . . . . .	8
Tora Hartebeest ( <i>Bubalis Tora</i> ) . . . . .	4	(But not more than 4 of	
Oryx Leucoryx . . . . .	4	these may be captured or	
White-eared Cob ( <i>Cobus Leu-</i>		killed elsewhere than in Kas-	
<i>cotis</i> ) . . . . .	4	sala and Sennar Provinces.)	
Uganda Cob ( <i>Cobus Thomasi</i> ) . . . . .	6	Jackson's Hartebeest ( <i>Bubalis</i>	
Addax . . . . .	6	<i>Jacksoni</i> . . . . .	12
Addra Gazelle ( <i>Gazella Rufio-</i>		(But not more than 4 of	
<i>collis</i> ) . . . . .	6	these may be captured or	
		killed elsewhere than in the	
		Bahr-el-Ghazal Province.)	

## PART III

Class 3. Animals and birds a limited number of which may be captured or killed by the holder of an "A" licence or a "B" licence, and the number of each species which may be captured or killed:—

Klipspringer . . . . .	1	Hérons . . . . .	2
Hippopotamus . . . . .	4	Storks . . . . .	2
(But there is no limit to the		Marabouts . . . . .	2
number of Hippopotamus		Spoon Bills . . . . .	2
which may be captured or		Flamingoes . . . . .	2
killed south of Kodok and		Ibis . . . . .	2
Sennar.)		Crowned Crane . . . . .	6
Ibex . . . . .	4	*Wart Hog . . . . .	6
(But not more than 2 of		*Tiang . . . . .	6
these may be captured or		*Large Bustard . . . . .	12
killed south of Suakin.)		Other Antelopes and Gazelles	
Wild Sheep . . . . .	2	not before specified in this	
Pelican . . . . .	2	schedule (each species) . . . . .	12
Egret . . . . .	2		

\* A licence holder on a trip of more than three months' duration may shoot four more of such of these for food in every additional month after the first three.

## THE SECOND SCHEDULE

## PART I

Animals and birds in respect of which the sale and purchase of the hides, horns, flesh, or trophies is absolutely prohibited throughout the Sudan.

All animals and birds for the time being included in Class I, and Mrs. Gray's Water Buck, White-eared Cob, Kudu, Water Buck, all other species of Cob, Roan Antelope,

Jackson's Hartebeest, Oryx Leucoryx, Ibex, Giraffe, Tora Hartebeest, Oryx Beisa, Eland.

## PART II

Animals in respect of which the sale and purchase of the hides, horns, flesh, and trophies is prohibited in certain parts only of the Sudan. Name of Animal: Rhinoceros, Reed Buck, Ariel. Districts in which the prohibition is in force: Kassala and Sennar Provinces.

## THE THIRD SCHEDULE

Export Tax on living animals. Each £E24:—Elephant, Giraffe, Rhinoceros.

Each £E10:—Buffalo, Uganda Cob, Oryx Leucoryx, Wild Ass, White-eared Cob, Oryx Beisa, Zebra, Jackson's Hartebeest, Addax, Water Buck, Tora Hartebeest, Kudu, Mrs. Gray's Water Buck, Roan Antelope, Eland.

Each £E5: Hippopotamus, Ibex, Balaeniceps, Addra Gazelle, Wild Sheep.

Each £E2:—Ostrich, Secretary Bird.

Each £E1:—Lion, Cheetah, Leopard.

## APPENDIX B

### PROCLAMATION REGARDING THE IMPORT OF AMMUNITION

1. This Proclamation applies only to ammunition imported for the personal use of holders of firearm licenses and of persons authorised to carry firearms without a license and as regards such ammunition the Proclamation relating to the importation of and dealing in ammunition and explosives and published in *Sudan Gazette* No. 64 of 1st July 1904 is hereby repealed.

2. Such ammunition shall only be imported by virtue of a permit to be issued by the Sudan Agent Cairo and such other officers or officials of the Sudan Government as the Governor-General shall from time to time authorise in this behalf.

3. Every such permit shall be personal and the ammunition imported thereunder shall not be transferred by sale gift or otherwise to any person not named in the permit except with the written permission of the Sudan Agent Cairo or the Civil Secretary or such other officer or official of the Sudan Government as may for the time being be authorised in this behalf by the Governor-General.

4. Permits shall be issued for the import of ammunition for the use of officers of the Army of Occupation stationed in the Sudan and of officers and officials of the Sudan Government and Egyptian Army and of civilians resident in the Sudan only in accordance with directions and subject to conditions from time to time laid down by the Governor-General.

Such persons shall be bound by all the provisions of this Proclamation other than those contained in the next following paragraph.

5. Permits shall be issued for the import of ammunition for the use of persons not mentioned in the last paragraph in accordance with the following regulations:—

(i) The applicant for a permit shall state in what district he proposes to shoot and the approximate time his shooting trip will occupy and give particulars of the weapons for which he wants the ammunition and if he applies on behalf of a party he shall also state the number of shooting members of his party.

(ii) The number of rounds of ball cartridge and shot-gun ammunition authorised in any one permit shall not exceed such amounts of each for each person as the Governor-



General shall from time to time order but it shall be at the discretion of the applicant how those amounts shall be distributed among the various kinds of ball cartridge and shot-gun ammunition which he wishes to import.

(iii) Ammunition for revolvers and pistols shall not be counted in the amounts of ball cartridge referred to in sub-section (ii) but not more than 100 rounds of such ammunition shall be authorised in any permit.

(iv) The permit shall state the name of the applicant (or in the case of a party the names of all the shooting members of the party) the numbers and particulars of the weapons for which the ammunition is required the districts in which it is proposed to shoot the approximate time intended to be occupied on the trip and the number of rounds of each kind of ammunition authorised.

(v) Every permit holder shall before leaving the Sudan account for the ammunition imported under his permit and shall either take the unexpended rounds out of the Sudan or deliver the same for destruction or other disposal of some officer of the Sudan Government authorised in that behalf by the Governor-General such accounting shall be made at Khartoum or such other places and to such officers of the Sudan Government as the Governor-General shall from time to time order.

6. No ammunition of a kind the importation of which for the time being is prohibited shall be authorised to be imported by any permit.

7. The Sudan Agent and any other person authorised to issue permits may refuse to issue any particular permit applied for and may refuse to issue any permit to a particular applicant without in either case being bound to allege any reason.

8. Every person who commits any breach of the provisions of this Proclamation shall be liable to a fine not exceeding

£E100 for each such offence and to revocation of all licenses to carry firearms or to hunt or shoot game of which he may be the holder; and the ammunition in respect of which any such offence was committed and all other ammunition included in the same permit shall be liable to confiscation.

(Signed) REGINALD WINGATE,  
*Governor-General.*

KHARTOUM.  
*January 10, 1907.*



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